

Please, hear me out!

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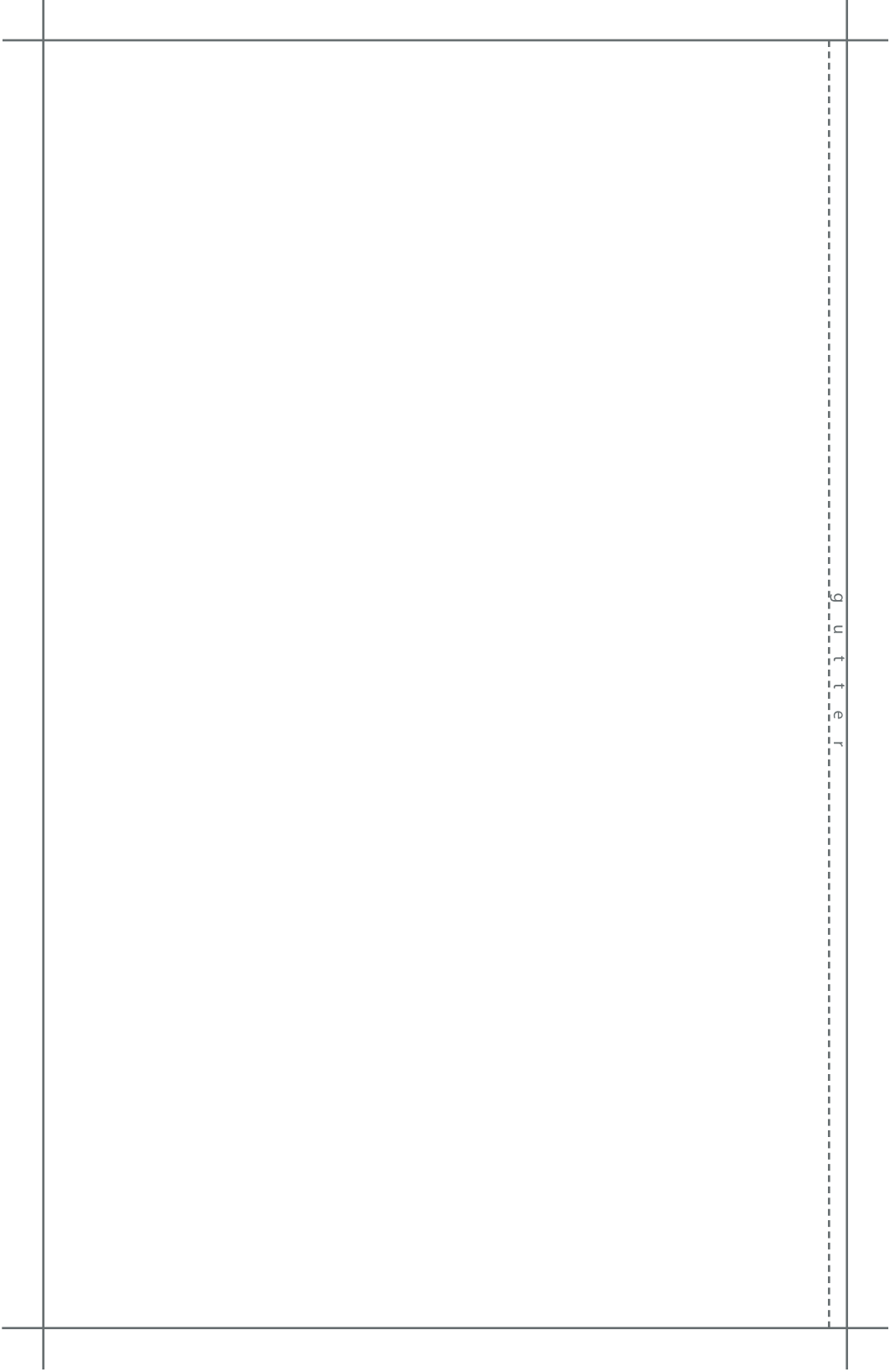
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g u t t e r

To Tuba Dzigivker



To write this book was quite a spontaneous decision. These are the things that you and everybody else have in mind, but somehow do not dare to speak them out, not because of cowardice, but probably thinking that it would not be appropriate, that it might be wrong. I have simply kept these thoughts in my mind for too long and felt that I had to share them with others before they are gone.

I could not keep silent. I felt that I had to utter these words as soon as possible. I saw the truth and knew that it was simply wrong to keep it for myself. Being silent meant taking part in committing crime. There was an urgent need to share it with you. It could not be ignored or delayed, because it has already been, for centuries. The words you are about to read are your words. I just dared to write them down and express them in the form of a book. Honestly, I do realize that people do not like reading such books; at times, because they evoke too many thoughts, which, regrettably, for many of us seem to be burdensome; at times, because their content might seem rather offensive, though no offense is implied; and at times, out of fear, fear of hearing the truth – something people do not like, and, as history shows, hate to hear (especially when it is about themselves).

I write not out of hatred, but out of deep disappointment which often becomes very painful. It is not disappointment which is accompanied by a feeling of superiority or disdain. It is a disappointment accompanied by a sensation of love and caring, and

also frustration and anguish at my inability to do more.

This book is about you and I, our life and the way we live it. This book is written not against you, but for you. And my words are not against you, but for you. I can see that Life is the most precious gift we have been fortunate to receive; but I can also see that we mistreat this gift and neglect it in the worst way imaginable.

My wish is not to impose my thoughts on you. I just hope I can reach out to you, and by the time you will have finished reading this book you will feel differently about yourself, your life and the purpose it may acquire. Please, try to be more conscious, and, be so kind as to hear me out!

Why is everything the way it is? Does it have to be this way? How can we live so? Why do we let each other suffer? Can't there be any way out? – these are the questions I have started asking myself. It is quite sad that I am asking myself these questions only now, when I am already 23, and not before. These are the things one should ask oneself much earlier and constantly keep them in mind, searching for the answers. These are the questions which are among the most crucial ones, such as: Why are we here? or What is the sense of life?

However, people live and will keep on living so, as if their lives were absolutely perfect, flawless and full of meaning. How many of us ever stop for a minute and ask ourselves: Where are we all rushing to? What for? Most of us live our whole lives without even questioning anything about what we see or do, as if everything was so clear.

What exactly is clear? What exactly makes us think that we are doing the right thing?

Time will fly so ruthlessly quickly; and maybe some, when they are on their death bed, will look back and realize that all they have lived for was senseless and had actually no real value at all. Nobody would like to be person with such an end. Nobody would like to regret his whole lifetime, or maybe even some moments of his life. But *time does not wait*. It will be gone and it will be too late to turn it back in order to change anything.

Why don't we start changing something *now* before it is too late?

This is exactly what parents tell their children when they are still young. They tell them: You live only once, so think before you act. In Russia they say: Your life is like a blank sheet of paper. Be careful! Don't make mistakes. You will not be able to erase them.

Thinking about my own life I have always wanted it to be like a movie. You know, like a good movie which usually leaves you in a very interesting emotional state, when you walk away and cannot help thinking about it, when you are so impressed by it that you wish to do something big or heroic. To my deepest regret, I did not really succeed in directing my life like a good movie, so I would sincerely say that I regret much of what I have done.

But coming back to parents' instruction - How many of us have not stuck to them? How many of us forgot or overlooked the fact that we live only once? Sometimes I think the problem is that people do not really understand the meaning of the word 'once'. 'Once' does not mean 'twice'; it means '*one time*'. Probably this is how you should explain things to people, like to a two or three year old child. Otherwise, and this is exactly what our behavior proves, we do not seem to understand.

Let us take a common life of a common man. At the very beginning he is born as a sweet baby, as

something beautiful and innocent as he enters our world. This little harmless boy is in fact *a new bright* hope which may even become a part of the solution to the problems of people's lives. ***But nobody sees it!*** The little child is getting bigger and stronger. Now he is at the stage when he can speak, listen and intensively imbibe all the things that are said to him and, what is more important, around him. While he is growing, his parents, aunties, grannies give him certain directions about how to behave, how to be a good boy and how to be a law-abiding citizen. They tell him a lot. But the problem this little boy faces is the inconsistency between what his instructors tell him and what he sees. He hears: Don't cross the street at the red light! Don't litter! Don't be rude! Be polite and respectful to people! Always tell the truth! and so on. And what does he see? He sees people around him doing just the contrary; and even his own parents(!), who, supposing that he won't notice it, may tell him lies, to the very little boy whose life we are trying to visualize. A great thinker and writer Leo Tolstoy wrote: "Nothing is more harmful than a bad example set by others. They bring into our life notions which never would have occurred to us without an example." Regretfully, we are not advanced enough to be able to see it.

And what about such instructions as: "Help people!", that may often be heard from our "upbringers"? Our sweet child with his pure mind full of good intentions receives this instruction *not yet knowing that he will hardly ever really apply it*. He walks down the street

with his dad or mom, sees some exhausted, gloomy faces, in dirty clothes or even in rags, lying or sitting on the pavement, begging for money or food, and he passes them by. He sees these faces, he sees these poor people, and knows that *everyone around him*, including his dad or mom, sees them too. But he sees ***no action!*** No one helps them. No one cares about them. No one is even looking at them. So the little boy thinks it is probably not the case when you need to help people as he has been instructed. And even if he has a strong desire to help these people, he will look at the grown-ups around him and the homeless and will think that they are acting right, just the way they are supposed to, and will pass them by, suppressing this very desire to help. And then it will happen again and again. And very soon the instruction „Help people!“ will completely lose its meaning to the child. It will exist in theory, but it will be absent from the practice. And so this instruction will be forgotten, for what one does not practice is easily forgotten.

The time you passed by the needy without helping in any way was exactly the moment when you caused harm to your child and not only to him, but to many others whom he would meet in his life. Through your own neglectful behavior, by not really understanding the phrase „Help people!“ yourself, you distorted the profound meaning of it in the pure mind of your child, which was rightly perceived by him, but which was not actualized due to your blunder. Unfortunately, it is not the only example of how a child's mind is spoilt.

Next time, the child hears „Don't smoke! Don't drink!“ and later on sees his parents do just the contrary. Once again the youngster will most likely think that what his parents do is absolutely right and whatever they told him was not meant literally or said just because he was too young. What then will happen is that he will stop taking all these directions seriously, or, in the best case, will simply wait until he is old-enough to try whatever was not allowed. Isn't it ridiculous? Is there any old-enough phase in people's lives when they can poison or stupefy themselves? Is there any right age to be allowed to be exposed to negative influences?

And once again, thanks to us, our child's mind is contaminated.

Now our child, already a young man, who smokes, drinks and passes the needy like the trees or garbage bins, receives some other interesting instructions, such as: You have to become a prosperous man, have a big house, a fancy car or better two or three, and a beautiful wife. Usually they do not even mention an intelligent wife, as though such thing did not exist.

There are other statements which supposedly are meant to make one a successful person, such as: “Only the strong survive! Life is cold! , Get yours!” Or what I have recently heard on TV said about competition in show business: “If a person is down on the ground, kick him!” And having assimilated all these messages, our young man divorces himself from the pure thoughts or

sentiments of his childhood, gives up some cherished early ideals and embarks on his dirty journey through life, full of lies and the senseless desire to be the best , the strongest, the richest, the most famous and the most powerful.

But for what? Has this fool ever asked himself if there is any rationale for living this way? He will live so, doing his best, ready to overcome everything and everybody, violating rules and overstepping any standards of moral behavior, just to get there, to get money, power, women and fame. It is like a train which has gotten off track but is still moving speedily, crushing and smashing everything on its way just to stop, arriving at nowhere and having left disastrous devastation behind. And so our young “hero“ will arrive at nowhere when he gets what and where he wants, having lost and hurt crowds of good people through his selfish and acquisitive behavior. But he will not understand that. He will be swallowed up by vanity and pride, thinking that he has proved to everyone that he is smart, that he is special, thinking that he is somebody. In truth, he is nobody, surrounded by fake friends and phonies who are there with him just to bask in the spotlight of his fame. The truth for our young man will be blurred by illusory success.

But one day, when he gets old and falls into oblivion, if his dishonest life and fraudulent deeds have not deadened his conscience completely, he will look back and say to himself: “All my life I was striving to get to the top, to acquire material riches and prominence...

And for what? I lived my life frivolously and now cannot even look back without being ashamed at what I have done..." His whole lifetime will seem to have flown away too quickly and he will realize that he missed the true beauty of it.

If you were reading our imaginary story carefully you should have certainly noticed that in the very beginning our baby was supposed to be *bright and hopeful*, bringing more light into this world of darkness. He or she could be the solution, or at least a part of it. ***But we were too blind to see it!*** We decided that he had to be just like us, useless, spending our lives in a blur, instead of living promisingly and consciously.

Consequently, a question arises: Who are we to blame for such a sorrowful end of such a promising beginning? There are reasons for such failure.

First, these are people around us who point us the wrong way by their foolish instructions. Even parents and teachers, whose duty is to bring us up, do the opposite and bring us down. Even when their instructions are good and useful, by not living according to them they distort the idea of goodness. Some examples of this have already been mentioned above.

Second, it is our hollow craving to imitate people who actually spend their lives in vain. I talk about anyone whom we idolize and follow blindly and thoughtlessly.

And third, it is our inability to resist the majority, their tastes, their likes and dislikes, their beliefs, ideas and opinions.

In the second and third cases, *we are to blame ourselves* for being weak and extremely susceptible to the influence of others. *We like not to think.* We like to copy people's lifestyles without contemplating whether those whom we ape are praiseworthy. Because if we thought of it for a moment and realized that our "idols" do not deserve the time spent on learning about them, we would stop imitating them. But we don't. We would rather kill years of our lives on following and trying to find out more details about our "heroes" and their careers, instead of spending *some minutes* on trying to figure out whether there is something about these people to admire them for, whether they are persons of dignity and integrity, whether following them *would make us better*.

Nowadays even if you ask people, especially the youth, why they like or admire a certain person, they immediately reply: "Well... I don't know. She is so beautiful! She is so awesome! I just like her!" Most of the times, this is exactly what our attitude is. We "just like" him or her without making a smallest effort to realize why.

And what is this statement, which embodies the most common answer to the question mentioned above: "I don't know... She is so beautiful!"? Is that all?? You admire someone just because he or she is

beautiful? It is time to understand that a human being is not a thing and there is much more that may be said about him, than just "She is so beautiful!" All you've got to do in order to find something more revealing and depictive is to use your brain. The main problem is that we do not like to use it. We use it so rarely, that it has already rusted inside. We are so much influenced by the society we live in, that the great majority of us have stopped using our heads, just switched off their brains, giving themselves entirely over to the imitation of others.

In most cases or situations during our lives we think about what others would do or how would they act instead of making decisions by ourselves and considering only what we should or are to do. However, most of us are not ready to admit this truth, and most people assert that their actions do not depend on anyone's opinion or views, but come exclusively from themselves. It is like an ant living in an ant hill which would claim that wherever he goes or whatever he does depends only on his will and nobody else's.

We do not like to be controlled, while in fact we are controlled by others just as much as we control them ourselves. We like to believe that we are independent. We like to believe that we are individuals. Even the hypocrites who totally misunderstand the concept of their motto: "Never go with the flow!", keep naively believing that they are self-determined.

And amid all these claims of being independent we

just can't do without being a part of a crowd. We love being in a stadium, in a club, at a party, participating in mass protests and demonstrations without even knowing *the reason* they were organized, visiting big events, such as outdoor concerts or different entertaining shows which all embody large gatherings of people. We love hordes! Most times we would even pay money just to be a part of them. And why? Why do we like them so much? The answer is straightforward: We like to be in a crowd because then it is easier to shut our conscience up, forget all morality and get rid of any responsibilities. Of course, afterwards it will be always possible to find a stupid excuse for some irrational actions, such as: "They did it too!" As the Russian philosopher P.D. Ouspensky wrote: "...in the psychology of a crowd...the seeming independence of individual man completely disappears."

But do not forget one thing! A crowd is an artificial world! You cannot be a part of it all your life. One day you will find yourself alone, facing your conscience which will hopefully make you more conscious of what you have done before. And then life will not seem to be so wonderful when you feel that you are a miserable creature who can be hardly called a human being, who has constantly followed his passions and desires, having lived only for himself and who has been focused only on his own wants and needs, thereby having had no true significance of existence for others. Life will not be fun anymore. You will understand that it really doesn't matter for others whether you live or die. And

there is no worse feeling than that. There is no worse feeling than realizing that nobody needs you. This is one of the major reasons why people commit suicide. They feel lonely, forgotten, abandoned, unloved and not needed.

Life is a weird thing. It is certainly beautiful. But we do not see it and cannot see it, because it has been covered so long by all the dirt we live in: greed, violence, hatred, vanity, hypocrisy, depravity and total moral decadence. So in the position in which we find ourselves, life is something confusing, blurred and completely misunderstood.

If one really wishes to see the beauty of life he should definitely look for a place isolated from city bustle, constant hurry and most important – isolated from *people*, where he can find inner peace and joy and feel his relation to nature and its limitless wonders, where he can see clearly that there is no such thing like property, there is no such thing like money or material riches. It is all illusion; it is all in our imagination. Moreover, he will realize that there are no ministers, presidents, rulers or governors, there are no ranks, classes, titles or higher positions and there are no laws or rules *made by men* which he *must* obey. He will feel small and insignificant and everything around will be so big and unembraceable. Feeling all this power around him he will see that all this idle talk of people being powerful is mere delusion. He will feel cut off

the entire world, their problems and worries of “who will get more?” He will feel purity which he cannot join unless he is pure. And he will feel free. However, this sentiment of freedom will not be absolute. There will be something else, something or somebody who is the Creator of all, in the midst of which he is standing, including him himself; some Higher Power whose laws he must respect and by which he should abide.

Standing there in the midst of the natural, *real* world, he will realize how little we actually need to be happy. It will become clear to him that our desire to acquire more and more is pointless. In the very end we will not be able to take it with us anyway. “Nature needs small things, but your imagination needs much.” wrote Tolstoy.

He will see that we look so ludicrous when we stress ourselves out trying to come up with new types of design and art, while the most truthful masterpiece is under our very noses, and that is – *Nature*. We haven’t learnt yet, or like little children seeing nothing special in “Mona Lisa”; we are not mature enough to see and value Nature’s real beauty.

He will realize that nothing in life is supposed to be as complicated as we always make it. In fact, everything is simple and thus beautiful. Simplicity is the most beautiful thing in the world. It is beautiful because it is true. Truth is *always* simple. A lie is *always* complicated.

What is life? Is life cars, big buildings, trains, fashion, advertisement, fizzy drinks, fast food, technology, the Internet, TV and constant entertainment? Is that *real* life?

It is time to understand that if we want to see true life we must learn to look at our world slightly differently. I say 'slightly differently' because one does not have to make great effort to see that the world in its true form consists of people and Nature, the rest are mere settings. I am not saying that cars, houses or progress in the sense we know and understand it are bad things, but all of these have an unhealthy influence, too great an influence on us. We are hypnotized, charmed, and swamped by it. We walk in a trance. As Frederick Douglass said: "...we walk in mental darkness..." If we were not entranced, we would see much more. We would see that nobody ever said that our life as it is now must be so. Maybe some sick and greedy politicians have said this. But who are they to even dare to say something of this kind? I could understand if our life was perfect; then we could stop the discussion at once. But we are much too far from perfection; so it is our duty to constantly talk about it and do it out loud.

Sadly, we are like marionettes, puppets who were put into certain settings and instead of being worked by strings, we are worked by institutions and behavior patterns which are prescribed to us, by fashion and entertainment which insinuate their tastes upon us, which thereafter can be called "acquired tastes"; as P.D.

Ouspensky put it: "...that is all sorts of artificial likes and dislikes, all of which are acquired by imitation and imagination."

In truth, our whole mode of life has been suggested to us. In his book "A New Model of the Universe," Ouspensky painted a perfect picture of it: "...suggestion is one of the chief factors both in individual and in social life. If there were no suggestion, men's lives would have an entirely different form... Man's suggestibility, i.e. his capacity to submit to surrounding suggestions, can be different. A man can be entirely dependent on suggestions, have nothing in himself but the results of suggestions and submit to all...he can show some resistance to suggestions, at least yield to suggestions only of certain definite kinds and repel others. But resistance to suggestions even of such a kind is a very rare phenomenon... The capacity for imitation in children and also in grown-up people greatly increases their suggestibility... Home education, the family, elder brothers and sisters, parents, relatives, servants, friends, school, games, reading, the theatre, newspapers, conversations, further education, work, women(or men), *fashion*, art, music, the cinema, sport, the jargon accepted in his circle, the accepted wit, obligatory amusements, obligatory tastes... - all these and many other things are the source of new and ever new suggestions. It is impossible even to imagine a man free from suggestion who really thinks, feels, and acts as he himself can think, feel and act. In his beliefs, in his views, in his convictions, in his ideas,

in his feelings, in his tastes, in what he likes, in what he dislikes, in every moment and in every thought, a man is bound by a thousand suggestions, to which he submits, even without noticing them, *suggesting to himself* that it is he himself who thinks in this way and feels in this way.”

Life as we know it or the life that we are used to is not an inevitability. We are definitely not destined to live so, as if its current could not be redirected. Most people go on living without even questioning destination towards which they are heading. But *some* manage to escape this flow. It can be compared to a river with fallen leaves stuck to its surface, seeming dead and immovable, whereas some of them, as if brought back to life, are swooped up by the wind and taken high into the air, where they are free again. However, if the wind is not strong enough, they will fall on the water again, just as these few will fall, if they are not strong enough.

Life as we commonly understand it and are used to is not true. People lie to us, we lie to ourselves and it all turns into one big lie. And the worst thing is that we start liking it. “A person can easily grow accustomed to living a lie, especially if he sees everyone around him living in the same way.” wrote Leo Tolstoy in his work “A Calendar of Wisdom”.

How can we possibly live what we normally call ‘life’? Do we like it so much or do we live so just as a matter of habit? There is not much to like about it.

Every day is just the same: you wake up, go to work or school, afterwards maybe meet your friends, who are mostly too busy to meet you anyway; in between you enjoy yourself having meals and idle talk with your family and colleagues. You come home where the Internet, newspapers, magazines and TV serve you and your family as your best entertainers, and then you go to sleep. Your next day will not be much different from your previous one, except for the weekends and holidays. On these days we think of how to entertain ourselves in the best way we can; *but we still remain unsatisfied*, because there is nothing else that we can think of but to go to a party, movies or an amusement park, or rather meet so-called friends (because in most cases they *are not* your friends anyway), get drunk with them or arrange some kind of an orgy. And I almost forgot to mention that apart from that, we like to go to churches, mosques or synagogues, talk about God or Allah as if we knew something about Him and even pray to Him, not putting any meaning into what we say and mumbling some words, just as a habit anyway. We wear crosses, crescents or the Star of David on our necks or wrists, or, as “the most devoted” of us, make tattoos on our bodies such as: Jesus’ face, praying hands or writing, something like “Only God can judge me!” Plus, we love jewelry, money, expensive clothing and merchandise, big houses or luxurious apartments and fancy cars. What a life! Not superficial at all! A life full of deep meaning and noble purpose!

However, there is only one right direction, which we for some inexplicable reason fail to find.

It is time to realize that we are not supposed to live like this, *we don't have to!* We deserve much more, if we see ourselves as human beings. And if we wish to see ourselves as such, we should strive towards what we deserve. Everyone should come to the understanding of what it means to be human and what makes us different from other living beings. We have something very precious, invaluable and truly unique; these are – *intellect*, our ability to reason; and *compassion*, our ability to feel, to have sympathy or pity for others. These are the most powerful possessions we have, these place us above any living being and these are supposed to guide us throughout our lives towards what we always search for, towards happiness.

Regretfully, we do not let our intellect and compassion take control over us. We would rather let something less significant, such as our desires and their temporary satisfaction have authority, or in some cases, complete dictatorship over us. And when we do let that happen, it is the first sign that we do not realize that our life will take its direction much depending on what we have chosen to follow.

Very often we forget the significance of being human, though at times we claim that we still remember who we are, confounding this notion with our superiority over Nature and particularly over animals when burning down forests, polluting the environment or killing poor living creatures. But one must know: *Being human does not mean to destroy! It means to create, living in absolute harmony with everything and everyone!*

But somehow, in the very beginning, we strayed from what we were supposed to be. And simply because our forefathers did certain things in their own way, we childishly keep doing almost exactly what they did. But our forefathers were not as great as we think they were. Some, definitely, were, but the majority of them were immersed in brutality, depravity and all sorts of evil things. Thus, we should not hastily praise them and their deeds. We should rather be more critical about our judgments. But we are not and therefore we still repeat their mistakes, probably hoping they would be proud of us, if they saw us now.

Honestly, there is nothing to be proud of. We still live like savages. All that we have succeeded in doing is having changed the decorations and settings. We are still as greedy as we were before, still misunderstand the real meaning of such words as **Justice** and **Equality**, still wish for more, still follow our instincts and desires.

We should start changing individually, and not wait for the crowd to change us. I read somewhere that according to Karl Marx there can be no real change in individual life until there is a radical change in society. Marx might be right in a way. However, I strongly believe that there can be no change in society until there is real change in the individual. We should stop waiting for something or somebody to come and change us. They say it takes courage to abandon one's past in order to live a new life. But "nothing worthwhile is gained without sacrifice" said John F. Kennedy.

We should make an effort to abandon this tissue of lies in which we live. We should stop pretending that everything is wonderful.

I once talked to a young woman who told me that she had a very rebellious and combative character and that she had to be born in 1960s -1970s, at a time when there had been much to fight for, such as desegregation or interracial marriage. And nowadays everything is perfect and boring and there is nothing for her to dedicate her ambitions, energy and maybe even her whole life. After our conversation I could not help thinking about the naivety of this young lady. Is she really so blind to the fact that the world is full of things to fight for? Is it really so hard to see that we are very distant from perfection? In my opinion, we live further from it than even a century ago, especially much further from moral perfection. This young lady has simply been brought up in the artificial world of the Western civilization, where young people are conditioned to be mindlessly happy, and most importantly, indifferent to what is really happening all around the globe, especially in the underdeveloped countries. This youth is like Prince Siddhartha who lived in a made-up world where there was neither misery nor sufferings that could be strikingly painful to see.

Most Europeans, or, in general, people of the West, believe that the world is almost great. Of course, they are aware of wars, hunger and maybe some epidemic outbreaks which occur now and then,

but by and large they suppose that the world is 'just fine'. Well, maybe *their* world is fine. We know that they distinguish between worlds. They even came up with a splendid phrase '*Third World Countries*'. They, completely neglecting the evident interdependence of everything that exists, show their careless attitude which can be interpreted only as: "We don't care about what is happening there, in another world; ours is fine."

Nothing is fine. And it is time to admit it. The situation is dire and the world is about to collapse. It seems that the majority of us do not really care. We have been made so insensible. Our minds are kept distracted by music and entertainment. Especially modern music plays its role as a major stupefactor. "Turn it up!" and "Get it on the floor!" – is all we need.

We spend our days senselessly and stagnantly.

Once I came across quite an interesting sentence that my close friend Melissa Achiaa wrote on a piece of paper. It read: 'When we go to a place of love, peace, harmony, we feel good and happy but not real.' First it didn't make much sense to me. But then I read it again. I read it again and was astonished by how much we ignore this truth. It is not that we don't see this truth. No, it is not. We just didn't notice how *we ourselves made it true*. We have created such conditions in which such truth could exist and be possible. We let this abnormality become part of our lives and even

part of us. It is now part of us because this very feeling that a peaceful and harmonious life filled with absolute happiness is impossible, like a virus, has permeated our thinking and emotional centers and has made us believe that it has been there, inside of us, all the time, that its origin is not in external conditions, but that this feeling is inborn.

In fact, there is nothing that says that this kind of sensation when we feel good and happy in the midst of love, peace and harmony may not become natural; nothing that says it may not be constantly real. The most awful thing is that nothing in us gives us a hint that it is possible to live otherwise. All we need is to really want to live peacefully and happily in love and harmony, and then make an effort to live so. Long ago people thought flying was impossible and it felt unreal. But now after some people made great efforts and many gave their lives for it, it is more than real. Flying has become ordinary, common, and even natural; and our lives would not be the same, if this particular achievement of humanity had not been made.

So why can't we reach the same state of thinking when joy and happiness cease to be simply exceptions and turn them into norms in our lives, when absolute harmony is common and 'even natural'?

We must focus so much on proper treatment of each other, on building good relationships, *based on respect, trust, and love*, and not on a wish to profit or benefit from one another. What I mean is, when you

meet a man, don't think of how you can gain from him; just be good to him, no matter whether he is rich, poor, or disabled.

Might it be that it is more secure to build the whole mode of life on good relations among people based on understanding, trust, care and support?

Imagine you have money and you feel financially secure. Moreover, in order to feel more secure, you focus on making even more money; you do not care about anyone, you live for yourself and all you need is *more* money, because you believe that *it* is the only thing that can save you in case things go wrong. But all of a sudden you go bankrupt. There is another world economic crisis. What are you going to do now? You lost all your money, which means the world to you. You will feel you have lost everything, since you have lived only for money. No one gives you loans, no one trusts your word, and no one thinks you'll give them money back, in case they lend you some. Moreover, you haven't helped anyone; why must they help you? You've already lived for yourself, now it is *their* turn to live it up. You are down and out. All your savings are gone. Despite all your efforts to make your future financially safe, you end up broke.

Now, what if things were a bit different in the beginning? You work hard, make your living and are far from starvation. You are successful, plus you are *caring and helpful*. You help people (they may be your friends, relatives or simply strangers that, if met more

than once, will finally be your friends, anyway) and generosity is inseparable part of your life. But life has an unpleasant surprise for you and you go bankrupt. Your money's gone. You are penniless. What are you going to do now? This time things may seem better for you. You've been always good to people, so you definitely have someone to turn to, someone whom you helped and supported before. The possibility that these people will turn their backs on you is as small as to get drunk on milk. These people will surely help you up when you are down. They may not buy you a new house or a new car, but they will definitely try to be at least as supportive as you were. You think they will not? I strongly believe the contrary.

Just try to see more in people. Try to look at each other differently. Imagine that the person next to you is not a stranger, but your brother or your relative; would you like to hurt him, cheat him, insult him, humiliate him or hate him? Would you be able to ignore his pain and his needs?

I must tell you about a very strong feeling that I was happy and fortunate to experience. The first time I felt it, I was standing on the platform of the main station of one of the towns in Germany and was looking at people. There were not so many of them, maybe about twenty or a few more. I was just looking at them. And suddenly a very new feeling, unknown to me, filled my chest and my mind. It was a sensation of strong affinity and closeness that existed between all them, and me, as well. There were whites, blacks,

Asians – people from five or six different countries. They appeared so different physically, but at the same time were so much alike inside. And I could see it! You know how they say we all are members of one big family – mankind? And precisely this I felt. Some sweet sadness overwhelmed me and it felt so good and was so intense; it was beautiful, new and at the same time very old as if something had reminded me of what I had long forgotten. It was like I knew that they all, or we all, people standing there on that platform, had come from one place, had one origin, and had some close ties that we had all forgotten. It is like you meet an old friend or your cousin with whom you grew up many years ago. Now nothing is the same, but you both know how close and good your relationship was before, how no one and nothing could come between you, and how everlasting it all seemed. And now you and him (or her) are standing there, looking at each other, and having all these sweet memories of your childhood in your mind, but none of you dares to talk about what it was like before.

Something of the kind was there on that platform. I was looking at these people and all of them seemed so isolated, standing so close, but being so distant from each other inside. They looked like little children who were put together in one room and left alone, and now they were standing there quietly, not knowing what to do. I was looking at all these people and I felt extremely sorry for them, that they couldn't see what I saw at that moment, that they didn't know what I

knew, that we all were so close, that we all were like brothers, and there was no reason for any of us to hate or hurt each other, and there was no place between us either for animosity nor indifference. Instead what we needed was understanding, care, help, support, respect and trust, and all of them mutual.

And so do many of us, just like these people on the platform sit in a bus, a tram or a train, stand in lines in stores, spend time together at work, school or university, walk by each other on the street, do everything side by side, shoulder to shoulder, back to back, and all the time without being aware of our close relations and kinship. We move in a complete daze, not being able to see the alarming state we are in. Our eyes are open, but we live as if they were closed. Even blind people focus more on what is important and live more rationally and truthfully than those who can see.

We see nothing important. And those who do see something important, as if disregarding it intentionally, do nothing.

What do we all live for? What is the purpose of our lives? And what is the purpose of each and every action we take? Why do we think that progress, in the sense this word is familiar to us, should be a primary objective of all mankind? Mostly, when we talk about progress, we refer to everything material. We work on new models of mobile phones, clothes, cars, buildings, furniture, TV sets, computers, audio

and video players; we change everything *around us, not in us*. Why have we chosen this kind of progress? I hate to call it 'progress', because there is no movement forward, no advancement, no improvement. It is simply modification. And to modify does not mean to move further. It means – to make partial changes, to adjust, adapt, change, vary, transform, alter; and this is precisely what we are wholly immersed in. We let this so called progress ruin us. We have so many designers of material goods; where are the designers of the soul? We stress ourselves too much and only bring ourselves closer to early death.

We work too much! And do you know why? Because we want money. In truth, we don't even need it. We just want it! Usually, when we don't need money, we suggest to ourselves that we do. We pursue money and material riches as if they could make us eternally happy. In fact, they never can. No one has been absolutely happy just because he or she had money. A rich person, if he is wise, always longs for something else, something he can't buy. Money can never be our goal in life. It is like food which only accompanies us during our lifetime. *You can never live for food, how can you live for money?*

We work too much, because we have told ourselves that we needed money. How come does all that drives us and controls us embody money? Isn't it disgraceful? We work so much that we don't even have time to develop either intellectually or spiritually. We have created and are in love with a system that keeps us

working all the time. I am not saying we all have to be lazy, sit around and do nothing all day. All I am saying is that we do the wrong work. We dissipate our energies. We haven't learnt yet to focus on what is most necessary. If we had, the world wouldn't have been so messed up, and everyone would be much happier.

Maybe somewhere we are making a mistake?

If we turn for a moment to religion, any of them, we will see something common in all their teachings. No holy scriptures tell us about the progress which is known to us. They all demand something different from us, some other development, a spiritual one. They all demand spiritual growth from us. God, Allah, Jehovah, however you call Him, expects something different from what we do. Haven't you thought about it? Maybe all He wants is just to see how strong we are; maybe all He wants from us is a simple righteous life, where our soul or our spiritual side, resisting senseless desires and temptations, not yielding to any of our weaknesses, is able to manifest itself and dominate our lives. I feel that we must let our spiritual side dominate our lives. It is obvious that we have misunderstood life and its task.

Nevertheless, we ignore our spiritual side. We do nothing to let it blossom. What we do very well is preoccupy our minds with nonsense. We constantly think about how we look, whether we have a slim figure, a nice body, a clean smooth skin, right facial

features, big muscles, big breasts or a tight butt, either we're tall or short, either we are hairy or bald, either we have big feet or a small penis, either your eyebrows are too bushy or you have too many wrinkles or freckles, either you have moles or warts, either you are fat or thin, either you have a long nose or small eyes, either your lips are too thin or too thick, either your skin is too pale or too dark. And what about the laughable behavior of those who undergo plastic surgery to enhance their looks?

Isn't it stupid? Is there nothing more important to do or think about?

We dedicate so much time to adornment of our appearance. We should rather beautify our inner side; it is much more important. It is even smarter to do it. It is like a choice between health and beauty. What would you choose? The work of our organs is vital to us; if they function properly, whether you are ugly or beautiful you will live. But if you are sick and something pains you, your beauty will not matter much to you. Plus, if you are sick, it is less likely that you will look beautiful. As usual, your illness will affect your appearances. Once again, this proves that our outer side is of secondary importance.

You have to take care of your character, as your care for your health; you have to learn to develop it, otherwise, without it, no matter how good-looking you are, you will be just an empty shell. There are plenty beautiful people all around the world. But that

doesn't make them special. Let's take a pretty girl, as an example. A pretty girl.... So what if she is pretty? You look into her eyes and see nothing, so blank is her look. It is like you look into the eyes of a plastic doll; there is no eloquence, no expression, no life.

There is always a limit in decorating and adorning our looks; but decoration and improvement of our inner world have no limits. There is always something to work on. And the more you work on bettering yourself innerly, the more you find to work on.

However, designers and people in the fashion industry keep telling us how and whom we should look like, creating numerous problems in minds of people, and thus in every society. If the cult of fashion didn't exist, there would be neither complexes nor cases of suicide committed because someone felt that he or she were too unattractive for this world. People who speak in favor of fashion tell us, or to speak more precisely, *teach us* more and more often how great it is to be superficial. And we allow them to do it, plus we admire them for doing so. I thought superficiality was a flaw, a drawback and a vice, which had to be avoided by searching for profound meaning in life. Not any longer?

What is fashion? Made by men and worshipped as something godly!? A tribe worships a tree believing it is God. At least this tree belongs to Nature, it is part of God. But fashion ... is part of what? Part of our stupidity and backwardness? To worship something

that is made by men is baser than idolatry of trees and stones which is practiced by some tribes.

People would have more time, be more self-confident and so much happier, if they cared less about their looks.

We should learn and do everything to beautify ourselves from inside. There is definitely an inner world in each of us. I felt its existence inside me. And I am sure everyone is able to feel it too.

Ask yourself, please, ask yourself more often what you live for. You have to ask yourself this question as often as possible, because your answer is too important and cannot be delayed. Your answer is like a lighthouse. Without having found it, you are lost. You will wander all your life not knowing where to go. And the longer you wander, and the further you go, the more you get lost. And one day it will be too hard to find the way out; and even if you do find the way out, it may be too late and you will not have time to get out, because you went too far to come back.

Thinking much about us, about our world and what we like most about it, I have come to conclusion that *we live for feeling*. Everything we do, our every act or deed is directed to experiencing some kind of feeling, consciously or subconsciously. Either we strive to pass an exam, graduate from school, watch TV, read a book, learn (willingly), chat online, have a conversation with a friend, meet a girl or a guy, spend

time with family, go to a party, a theatre, a bar, make friends, take a ride in a car, listen to music, buy new clothes, eat, drink, sleep, flirt, love, hug, kiss, miss a person, think about people close to us, travel, play, do sports (and it doesn't matter whether you are trying to lose weight or pump up your biceps to boost your self-esteem or simply because you enjoy it), swim, take a bath, even go to a toilet, take a walk, look into the sky, make presents, cuddle with your beloved, have a family, or see your kids grow – all because we like it (either our body or our soul). According to the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus 'to like' means 'to find agreeable or enjoyable, to take pleasure in.

Now, if we try to trace where the strongest, the deepest, the most special and unforgettable feelings come from, we will see that they are born not while spending time in a toilet or while eating, but rather when we interact. The most beautiful feelings are born in relationships between people. Keeping this in mind, it is easy to see that the most important aspect of our life is good human relations; to build them up properly should be our primary goal. In this way we will be able to enjoy life and *take pleasure* in living this life more than we do now; plus this joy will be real.

My mom has always said that the most important thing in life was not money, not fame, but good human relations. She said that if I was able to build these, I had already won. She said that no matter what, I must not submit or yield to the circumstances I am in, and no matter how hard it is, I must not let these conditions

make me inhuman. At first, I didn't really understand what she'd meant by that. But now I surely do.

One of my friends, Dmitriy Zatyshnyy, once said that there was *nothing above* human relations; they were vital for humanity and its advancement. They bind us, keep us up and hold us down, and simply make us feel good.

Sense of kinship is in every one of us. Let us think together about it. When two Russians meet each other abroad, in Germany, the US, Israel or Turkey, they feel so close and so related. Something binds them, and it is their language, common culture and more or less, the same mentality. When two Africans meet in a country with a predominantly white population, they feel just the same. Even if they do not come from one country and do not speak the same language, here, the binding element is their skin color. This particular affinity lets Africans call each other 'brother' and 'sister', something that probably is less likely to happen between Russians, especially at their first conversation.

However, the same happens with whites who find themselves in Africa, India, or places in China seldom visited by foreigners. I have experienced this myself while staying in Ghana, Western Africa, for some months. Every time I saw a white person, I could feel his or her look fixed upon me; they would surely smile to me and greet me. At times they did it somehow awkwardly, as if they didn't know how

to act. Of course, they didn't. It was something new for them, something coming from inside of them, as if something had awoken in them and made them feel a little differently about me, and this something was sense of kinship. If two whites see each other in Europe, they do not feel it. They cannot feel it. Or, I would say, they can, but only if they really want to.

Once I was standing by the roadside waiting for a tro-tro (a minibus in Ghana). Suddenly, out of nowhere, a white guy with a big smile on his face ran up to me and told me how happy he was to see a white person. According to what he said, I was the first one in three months whom he was lucky to meet. After a short conversation, he wished all the best to me, and added: "Brother! Take care of yourself!"

He didn't care that I was from Russia and he, from Australia. All that mattered to him was the point that I was white, just like him. In the place, where we were a minority, he felt I was like him, he felt that we were one, he called me his brother! I wonder if he would have done the same if I had met him in Australia or Europe. Then, I am sure, he would simply have passed me by, not noticing *me*, '*his brother*'.

That is exactly how day by day we forget or rather *ignore* the fact that we are brothers, that we are one. Color, race, tribe, nation, language, culture, tradition, religion do not matter. Believe me, they don't! Simply imagine you have been on an island all alone for months or for years. Trust me, you would be eternally

happy to have the company of another human being. It would not matter whether he was white, black or yellow, young or old, a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or a Buddhist, tall, short, or thin. You would not care what or where he is from. You would disregard all the differences between you and this person. You would identify yourself with him, and he in his turn would identify himself with you, simply because *you are both human*. You can even place a Jew and an Arab on that island; the result would be the same. At least, and I can promise you that for sure, they are not going to kill each other.

We are part of one family. Why do we forget our kinship so often? Why don't we treat each other the way members of the family are supposed to?

Jealousy, delusions of grandeur, greed, selfishness, envy, pride, avarice, lust, never-enough plague and I-am-better-than-you epidemic have paralyzed us from head to the toe.

It is not that we don't know what these bad qualities are. We do know them and at times know them very well. However, many of us, after having been told that they were selfish or supercilious, answer: "So what? I am what I am. Nobody's perfect!" It is like someone who can't read says: "So what? What if I can't read? Many others can't either!" But be smart! 'You can't read' does not mean 'You can't learn to'. 'Nobody's perfect' does not mean 'Nobody should try to be perfect'. Especially those who call themselves Christians have apparently

forgotten that the one they look up to, the one they praise so often, repeatedly said: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Moreover, it would be a life-long task, which would be certainly better than pursuit of money or power.

Why don't we resist all the negative sides of human nature? Why don't we fight them? Why, by allowing all this negativity to flourish within us, do we let them, or actually us, destroy so much goodness which is also within us and which could successfully dominate our lives?

You are aware, as perfectly as I am that we have good and evil inside of us. And we also know that following evil and doing bad things can lead us only to something negative, never positive. So why don't we rather do good things? At least this way we will be on the safe side, because nothing will lead us astray. Moreover, it can bring us nothing but happiness and joy.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the world, mildly speaking, is foul, some people will say that they would have to give up their personalities, their individualities, to live a superbly good life. "It would not be the same", they say. It is like a dirty toilet which must be cleaned, and people scream: "Let us keep it so! It would not be the same! We would miss this crap!" So what if it is not the same? Should we rather let it foul and poison us? The same with the world and the people who claim it is wrong to clean up the mess, because they'll miss it.

I don't think people really want to make the world a better place to live in. If they did, they would have already done it. They simply don't want it; hence, they don't think about it. They don't think about it; hence, they don't want it. Because normally if you want something very much, you think of it constantly, as those who haven't eaten or drunk for a long period of time think about food or water.

But no matter how hard I try, I can't find the reason why people like the world in its present state. I try, but I can't. I can't understand what our stagnant, superficial, senseless life gives us? What is so extraordinary and gripping about it that we hold on it so tight in fear to lose it? Does it provide us with something special? Does it give us something new? Apparently, it doesn't, if we keep complaining about it endlessly. We are tired of our present lifestyle. We are bored by it. And day by day this tiredness and boredom gets worse and gloomier. We all know it and we all feel it! We realize that we are not made for such life. Even the stress that we so often, and at times permanently, experience is just another sign that we are doing something wrong, that we don't need it. It is obvious that we have gone astray and wander somewhere like sheep waiting for someone to come and show us the way. It is a very sad show that we keep demonstrating. No one likes it any longer. It is neither amusing nor does it arouse interest or delight. It is stupid and ridiculous. Every single moment of the show is very well known to the audience and even

better to its participants. Everyone feels that there is a need for another performance, a totally different one, otherwise everyone will go mad.

Of course, we need something new. And only those succeed in approaching it who really want a change to dwell in them. They wish for a change, because they are not satisfied with themselves. I am not talking about physical appearance; rather about the inner state of soul. They woke up and see that they are living wrong; they feel they need to do something about it. And sometimes they go for it.

But most people are happy with what they are, because they just don't contemplate much about what they are. They don't want to change anything. And the reason why they don't is because *they are simply asleep*. I am not saying this in a figurative way. I mean that their consciousness is in a deep sleep. It is not awake, thus, *they* are not awake. Consequently and obviously, when they are asleep they cannot know or see that they live wrong and that they need a change. If they could, it could only happen when they are awake.

First, people need to awaken their consciousness. Otherwise, when it is stupefied, intoxicated and put asleep by alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, club music, idle talk and restless pursuits to sate insatiable lust, no matter how articulate you are, no matter how eloquent your words are, no one will listen to you. Everyone will hear what you say, but no one will really perceive the meaning and profundity of sincerity of your message, no matter how true to life it may be.

Talking about cigarettes – why do they still exist? I thought it was more than clear that they *damage health* and ultimately *kill*. So what is still going on? If they *kill*, why are they allowed? Don't you see? Don't you see that this is a legalized murder? Those who take part in it, those who produce tobacco, work for the companies that produce tobacco, grow it, distribute it, sell it, advertise it and promote it by any means possible are criminals. Moreover, they are very cruel criminals if they are aware (or brainless criminals if they still do not realize) that *they kill millions of people annually all over the globe*.

The same is true for those who produce and support the sale of alcohol. They must think more about what kind of detriment they have been causing to society. They must admit that alcohol is one of the major causes of crime: be it murder, domestic violence, street fights, rape or road accidents. Because when one is drunk, he or *she* does the most foolish and most irrational things one can ever think of (and mostly thinks of when drunk). And they get drunk at parties, during feasts, parades and festivals because without it they would clearly understand the irrationality of their behavior when taking part in such events. People can't control themselves, wives and children get beaten, friends quarrel and fight, manslaughter, people drive and kill the innocent, girls get abused and raped, man falls asleep and fire breaks out, people get hurt, spouses cheat, some get HIV, AIDS and bouquet of other diseases, they lose their job, their friends, their

family, their home, finally *their lives* – these are only few examples of what drunkenness leads to, and these are extremely less likely to take place in our lives if it was not for alcohol. Let's not talk about portion, let's not talk about some measurement. Just take it out of our lives! Get rid of it! Life without alcohol will certainly do us no harm.

One thing we have to understand is that someone, and this someone is not one person, benefits from this complete unconsciousness of people. Someone basks in wealth and lives a perfectly (from a material point of view) good life, while others struggle everyday just to get by and not to starve. Somebody is getting rich on our hard labor, sweat and sometimes blood, doing nothing. This someone's life is based on the stupor of masses. This someone does not care about you and me; he does not care that you are fed up with such a life, which should rather be called *existence*. He or, let us say, *they* do not care that you have two jobs so you can afford the most essential things for your family; they do not care that working so hard you hardly have time for a quality talk with your spouse and kids; they don't care that you have to *leave your home* and country and go abroad so you can earn a bit more to be able to survive; they don't care that people are being exploited; they don't care that you can't send your son or daughter to college or university; they don't care if you've got lung cancer or HIV; they don't care that people spend sleepless nights in pain because they cannot afford proper treatment in hospital; they don't

care if you get evicted because you can't pay rent; they don't care that the lives of so many are unbearable; they don't care if there is poverty and war out there; they don't care if people die... They do not care!

It doesn't really bother them that we cannot cope with the system. And *it is* a system. We are trapped, locked up and we have no time for living Life. They deprive us of any personal contact with each other, leaving to us some imitation of it, which only *appears* real to us. They let competition between us prevail, as the capitalist system favors.

This system makes you numb and insensible and them, rich and free to do what they want. Because while you work they *read* and *educate themselves* in the best way you can imagine. Yes, they read, not 'Harry Potter' and not about 'How to seduce women' or 'What is fashionable nowadays', but about how to keep you down, how to enslave you without any noticeable signs, how to make you believe that it must be this way and no way different. You think you're free? *They made you believe so.*

This freedom is illusion. They let you test the limits of constitutional freedom by legalizing gay marriages, prostitution and so-called light drug consumption. But you are still trapped and encaged. Try to step out of the system for a year. And you will see that the moment you try to come back to this freedom-loving system, you will be literally locked out. They won't let you in. Or even if they do, you will be the last in the

line to so-called prosperity. Try to go against the flow. I am not saying go on a spree of killing and breaking laws. Just try to do something different. Don't go to school or work where you are taught or forced to do only what they want or allow you to. Stay home, for instance, and *learn, read, think and observe* what goes on in the world. Do it, not causing any harm to anyone. Just sit and *educate yourself* by getting acquainted with thoughts of such people like Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi, Tolstoy and many many more like them. Try to enlighten yourself no matter how old you are, knowing that it is never too early and never too late for enlightenment. And maybe then the dreadful inconsistency of everything we are surrounded by will become more apparent to you.

But, they don't want you to know more than they need you too. For them you and I, *we*, are elements. This is the expression which is very often used in politics – 'elements in society'. Of course, using the word 'elements', that actually belongs to something inanimate, in reference to living beings, and to be more exact I have to emphasize that this is in reference to *people*, even their attitude towards us changes. When you say 'downtrodden elements' it does not sound as comprehensible, touching and what is most important - *real* as 'abused, suffering, needy, helpless, oppressed and tyrannized people' does. And why do they try to hide the reality by calling poor countries 'underdeveloped'? Why not just call them poor and devastated as they truly are? The language

that they use is so dry and dead, that having heard it, one is not touched or moved by it; no feeling of compassion or care is there for what happened or for what is happening.

We must understand that politics is the game according to whose rules we all must play. This game is about life. Politics is about life, yours and mine. And you and I should understand how this works if we want to be more independent about the decisions we make and the life we lead.

But I repeat again that they don't want you to know or understand more than they need you to. Formal language is one of the best tools to prevent you from doing so. They use it all the time, sound so smart and solemn. They are so articulate! Their speeches are so smooth and persuasive! Unfortunately, they are not so clear and straightforward. They are mere equivocation and prevarication whose aim is to evade the truth and mislead the masses.

People don't like formal language. It is neither close nor familiar to them. One can't get through to people, can't succeed in making contact with them using formal language.

How do they expect us to understand the language we don't speak? We don't know what they talk about!

But they don't want us to understand what it is all about. By usage of formal language they intimidate us, making us think of ourselves as ignorant and of

them, as super intelligent, taking control over us and deceiving us in any way possible.

It is clear when one wishes to inform someone about something, wants to educate him and to make sure that he knows what the whole thing is about, he should try to create some kind of bond between himself and the crowd, build a bridge by means of which he can convey his message. If one uses various scientific terms and formal style of speech, such a bond is hardly possible; it scares people off and it creates a huge gap between such a speaker and audience.

First of all, try to think of how much they want us and our children to be educated and learned. They always say: "We don't have enough finances for building new schools and implementing new educational programs.", though they have money for weaponry. And they keep telling us that *we* need it to be protected. They simply don't realize that their country will be protected more when its people are educated than when they are armed. And they do have finances for living in luxury, traveling and spending weeks in five-star hotels even when at work; because, in fact, *this is their work*. How many of us sleep in five-star hotels or have all this comfort in the midst of splendor and extravagance *when at work*? They live in luxury at our expense, and tell us that they don't have money for education. If it is our money, aren't we to decide what to spend it on? It is perfect for them when people remain ignorant. They don't really demonstrate it, but their aim is to make you

function in a society, make a tool out of you by which they can profit even more. They don't want you to be a thoughtful, knowledgeable, insightful person. They don't want you to live, think and feel. They are not interested in you searching for a true sense in life. They want everything to be mechanical and automatic. They want you to function in the midst of all this; *to function* is an attribute of a machine, not of a living being

They arranged such things for us as work and distraction. There is nothing else. Work is fine; it is vital for living in a prospering stable society. But what about distraction? Isn't it a state of mind in which the attention is diverted from an original focus? By the way, we spend our whole lifetimes in this state of mind. In simple words, to distract means to draw one's attention away, while he or she has to concentrate on a certain task, on what is to be done. Is there nothing to do in the world? Is *everything* good? We have to be focused and make sure that everything everywhere is good. Meanwhile we distract ourselves and let others distract us even more.

So you work, and then the moment you leave your workplace, distraction comes onto the scene. Music, the Internet, magazines, newspapers, TV shows and series, unsubstantial literature, shallow talk with friends, clubs, parties – these are nothing but distraction. And everything that people want nowadays is *fun*. Of course, we cannot work all the time. We need some rest. But that *doesn't mean* we

should rest *always*. Everybody constantly searches for some kind of amusement or entertainment. Men walk around in search of fun, women do the same; so everybody is occupied with some kind of senseless activity. We even work not in order to create or produce something, but in order to make more money so we can have *more fun*. Consequently, this question arises: *Who is to think* then? If everybody is having fun, there is no one to think! And especially there is no one to think of those who really need us, who need our compassion, help and care. Who is to think about them? Who will help the downtrodden? Those who tread them down?

It is not only people's fault that they don't think. Those who run the system don't really let them. Each and every political system becomes so complicated, that people hardly have time for themselves. Everything is controlled and the tempo of life has been constantly pushed on. People are stressed out everywhere; some even commit suicide because they can't cope with the pace. And although they sense that everything ought not to be so complicated, they are disillusioned by thoughts that they can't do anything against this.

However, I have also come to realize that in general, *people don't like to think*. If you want to understand better what I am talking about, simply try to visualize the following for a moment: You are alone; there is no electricity; so you can't switch on your PC or TV; there is no entertainment whatsoever; there is not even a book by your side. You are all

alone, in absolute quietude, with the incessant stream of thoughts running through your mind. Try not to imagine or dream about anything. Try to order the flow of your thoughts. Please, don't think this is some type of a self-help book and I am trying to brainwash you. Simply try to observe yourself. Having stopped daydreaming, try to think about big issues that are *of major importance to you*, such as: What am I? Is there any purpose for which I am here? Is there anything or anyone that created me? What if I die tomorrow? What if I am no more? What will be then?

There are many other questions that you can ask yourself at this moment. But even after asking these, within 5-10 minutes you will try to think of something completely different. You will try to run away from these thoughts; you will try to escape them, as if something about them really scared you. In such situations people say they get depressed, feel down and heavyhearted. They feel very uncomfortable with all of these thoughts. They say they become sad. It is like sad melancholic music that people don't like to listen for too long saying that it makes them think too much. As if 'think too much' was something bad. I've always thought it was something positive. Not any longer? Once, my good and close friend Anya Litviniuc said: "There is splendor in grief." I sincerely believe there is much truth in these words, because to my mind, not always but very often, exactly at these moments, in moments of grief, as if awakened from sleep, we start contemplating life and its most important issues.

So we have work and distraction – which turns out to be quite a sad reality. You'd ask: "Why sad?" - Because *Life* is missing. Where is *Life*?

However, let us come back to those who do everything necessary to keep us overloaded and unmindful. What is *their real work*? What is *their task*? Let us ponder on it together. They stand for justice, peace, equality. And what do we have? None of these! Why do we have all these systems: capitalism, socialism, democracy, communism, etc? Aren't they supposed to improve and ease our lives and not worsen and burden them? Aren't they all directed to amelioration of the state of the world? Somehow change is not really apparent. They tell us about some progress, some advance and development. The question is: What is it that we all anticipate achieving, especially by what we call progress? I thought it was all for improvement and its consequent perfection, and then sustaining this perfection. However, disregarding how disappointing it is, it appears that those who talk the most about changing the world and whose duty and responsibility it is to do it by any means necessary, are those who don't want to change anything and *don't* change anything, because they are steadily prospering from it. Their actions are not directed to perfection of standard of living, but to *maintaining* our lives as *bearable*. And even if so, let us not forget that *the lives of hundreds of millions of us are unbearable*. And then they talk about *peace*. But what should poor and abused people do in their situation? Sit quietly and peacefully suffer?

You should try to understand that no one up there is very interested in changing the state of the world? No one is very interested in making you happier. Why should they split any state wealth among millions if it can be split among very few? They are also not interested in you thinking about this, that is why they keep you primitively-satisfied, loving tobacco, liquor, pop stars, fashion, entertainment shows, and sex; they especially stress the significance of the latter in our lives making us believe that we can't be happy if we don't have it. Have you asked yourself why? Because it sells *perfectly*, makes them rich, prosperous and even more influential. They become strong and powerful, and you, addicted, weak and doubtlessly obedient, because when you are hooked up, manipulating you is no longer a difficulty.

There is so much to do in the world, and instead of drawing your attention to it, they contaminate your mind with everything possible. First, they plunge you into this fake world, suggest to you how beautiful it is, let you feel that you may become part of it, especially by buying their products, and then make sure that you are trapped in it and never able to get out. They do this in a very clever way, so you don't notice anything. They make you like what you like, or speaking more precisely, what you *think* you like and what you *think* is real. They make sure you believe that this is the real world, and then they tell you: "This is the reality! We do what we do, because we just reflect this reality." Basically, they rape your mind.

Instead of keeping us focused so we can all approach material abundance sooner, they keep distracting and stupefying us. And the worst thing is that we don't see it; or rather we don't want to see it, claiming endlessly that *we* make choices and that we are driven by *our* thoughts, *our* likes and we are controlled by *ourselves* and no one else.

What is wrong with people? Nobody wants to change anything.

We say our 'life sucks' all the time. There is no end to our complaints. But have you ever asked yourself what *you* did, you in particular, to change something significantly about your life? You simply put your trust in politicians? Or still waiting for Messiah to come?

What an amazing phenomenon! No one is ready to do anything, though complaining restlessly. We are thirsty people, unwilling to fetch water to quench our thirst, waiting for someone else to do it for us.

In the midst of crisis, any crisis, one must pull oneself together, face a difficulty, find the right solution and overcome the crisis by eliminating it forever making sure that factors that cause it will be rooted out once and for all. There should be more determination and resolution in the actions of people, all of us, not only officials that actually stand up for eradicating these causes, but all humanity, in the actions of each and every person. Why do you expect

politicians to rid the world of injustice? It is up to you, as much as up to them, to contribute to the common good of mankind. Why can one bring something beautiful into being and others simply enjoy it, not bothering to make something precious in their turn? It is time for collective action!

Please, don't tell me it is impossible to change the world! It makes me sick when I hear it. It is people's weakness. People think of it too little, if at all. They are preoccupied with something else.

I give you my word, this is how people behave: You speak to them and they tell you how bad and hard life is. But as soon as you exhort them to action, to put what they say into practice, they say they don't have time.

They don't have enough time for thinking or talking about it. But try to think how much time you have for thinking and talking about food, fashion, cars, or for gossiping about each other. Think about it! And you tell me you don't have time? You tell me we can't change the world? That's pathetic! Try to think and talk about it as often as you do about these meaningless things, and I guarantee you that change will come within a decade.

Don't you see how easy it would be to change the world and reach everything we dream of, if we didn't dissipate and disperse our energies and strengths?

I don't understand what's been happening and

don't think anyone should. I see grown-up men, but see no grown-up behavior!

Think of how we live! There is war out there! A war against purity! We are at war! This is a civilized war for money and prosperity. Mostly we don't shed each other's blood, but at times bloodshed happens, as well. And *no one* is eager to be a conscientious objector in this war. However, let me remind you that to be scared to go against the system means to live in accordance with it and thereby to support it.

Those who run this system make sure you know, learn and are exposed to such knowledge which will not incite you and make you revolutionary. They don't let you know more than they need you to. That is why it is not enough simply to read or watch. Then you would be like a machine, programmed. You should be very careful about what you learn. You need to ponder on what you have read, heard or watched. You have to analyze things; you should learn to think critically and look at the world objectively. Sieve everything through yourself and let only the best and most truthful thoughts stay and dwell in your mind. As Mohandas Gandhi said: "Never take anything for gospel truth even if it comes from a Mahatma (man of God) unless it appeals to both.... head and heart." Maybe if you do so, you will be able to clear up your mind and break free from the system. Or maybe not; mostly it depends on how much you want to be free and feel free. But if you like the present world order, not much can really help you and make you free.

So-called little people don't want to help themselves and so-called big people are not going to help them either. If they did, they would have already done so long ago. Do you think they don't know how? It is more than clear that *to stabilize each society, and thus the entire world, people's energies are to be channeled into productive activity*, instead of dissipating them on the detrimental.

However, those who benefit from mass slumber or rather mass coma, do not intend to awaken or *enliven* anyone, because then they would have to part with their profits. Moreover, they do not intend to make us rational human beings. First of all, they don't know what it means. How can they possibly make *us* human if they don't know what to be human means? They teach us, me and you, how to be animals, not wild ones, but let us say 'civilized' animals. It is easier to rule over animals than over rational creatures. Nevertheless, they are no better than what they actually make of us. They themselves embody the perfect picture of such animals. And they show it best by their own example. They keep suggesting to us that this is the only way and that we are supposed to like what they like and live as they live. Governors, politicians – all of them statesmen, who instead of governing simply manipulate us, are beasts that aim for wealth, status, influence and power; predators that are ready to devour each other or cut one another's throat simply not to be overshadowed or outshone by each other. And you think they care about you? Then, please, think better.

You know, when I was a child I was taught to respect those who were older than me, listen to them and obey them, because, as it was often said, they know what is best. So I used to look up to them and had no doubts that what they did was always right. But as years went by I started noticing that something was wrong, some things that grown-ups did were wrong. At times, when having said this out loud, I was told: “You are too young to judge grown-up people’s actions. You don’t know what life is about. When you get bigger and *mature* you will understand.” And yes, now I understand, but not what they thought I would. What I understand is that people, no matter if they are thirty, forty or sixty years old, don’t know themselves what it is to be mature, what it precisely means. They simply act as if they knew it, simply play grown-ups, simply imitate one another thinking that probably the other person knows better what maturity is.

In order to find out what it really means, or to be more precise, not what it means, but *what is said to be* **adult** and **mature**, I turned to a dictionary that was near me at that time; it was The Oxford Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus, an American edition. And I was shocked by what I found. According to this dictionary the following is defined (I omit some of the definitions which are irrelevant for the discussion):

Mature – **1** with fully developed powers of body and mind; *adult*. **3** (of thought, intentions, etc.) *duly careful and adequate*. And its synonyms (further as Syn.): **1** grown (up), full-grown, of age, *experienced, knowledgeable*.

Maturity – *adulthood*; ripeness, readiness; *perfection*, completion, fullness.

Perfection – **1** act or process of making *perfect*. **2** state of being *perfect*; faultlessness, excellence.

Thus, somebody who is mature is expected to be perfect.

Perfect – **1** complete; not deficient. **2** *blameless in morals or behavior*.

We shouldn't forget that apart from this, maturity means adulthood.

Adulthood – state of being *adult*.

Adult – **1** mature; grown-up. **2** *a* of or for adults *b* *euphemistically* sexually explicit; *indecent*.

So we have *mature* which is *duly careful and adequate*, as mentioned above, and *blameless in morals or behavior*. And we have *adult* which is in fact *mature*, but which is *indecent* too. Quite confusing, isn't it? However, let us go on to a more detailed analysis of the word *adult*.

Adult means *mature* which means *experienced* and *knowledgeable*.

Experienced – **1** having had much *experience*. **2** skilled from *experience*. Syn.: **1** *mature* **2** accomplished, proficient, *knowledgeable*, qualified.

Experience – **1** observation of or practical acquaintance

with facts or events. **2** *knowledge* or skill resulting from this.

Knowledge – **1** awareness or familiarity (of a person, fact, thing, etc.) **2** **understanding** of a subject, language, etc.

Understanding – **1** *a* ability to understand or think; *intelligence*. *b* power of apprehension; power of abstract thought. Syn.: *intellect*, mind, brain, *sense*, *reason*, *wisdom*, insight, etc.

Intelligence – **1** *a* *intellect; understanding*. *b* quickness of understanding. Syn.: **1a** *intellect*. *b* cleverness, astuteness, *brightness; wisdom*, sagacity.

Intellect – **1** *a* faculty of *reasoning, knowing, and thinking*, as distinct from feeling. *b* **understanding**. **2** clever or *knowledgeable* person. Syn.: **1** *rationality, reason*, insight; *intelligence* **2** intellectual

Wisdom – **1** state of being *wise*. **2** *experience* and *knowledge* together with the power of applying them. **3** sagacity; *prudence*; common sense.

Wise – **1** having, showing, or dictated by *wisdom*. **2** *prudent; sensible*. Syn.: sage, *sagacious*, judicious, *reasonable, intelligent*, astute.

So many laudable words and all refer to being *mature* and *adult*. But we have forgotten one tiny detail, which later will not seem tiny at all, and that is *adult* also means *indecent*. Before that, we must have read

that it is *indecent* speaking *euphemistically*. First, what is euphemism? According to the same dictionary, euphemism is *mild* or *vague* expression substituted for a harsher more direct one. So in order to elucidate the vagueness of the word *indecent*, let us break it down and try to find the exact meaning of this word, which undoubtedly was not used here accidentally.

Indecent – offending decency. Syn.: *shameless*, shameful, outrageous, *repellent*.

Repellent – *repulsive*, *revolting*, disgusting, offensive, *repugnant*.

Those are weighty words. Unfortunately, they don't mean anything positive.

Repulsive – causing *aversion*, *loathing*, *disgusting*. Syn.: *revolting*, *abhorrent*, *loathsome*, *repugnant*, offensive, obnoxious, unpleasant, sickening, *vile*, *hideous*, horrible.

Revolting – *disgusting*, horrible. Syn.: *loathsome*, *abhorrent*, *nasty*, *offensive*, *vile*, *slang gross*, *rotten*.

Repugnant – *repulsive*, *abhorrent*, *disgusting*, offensive, *revolting*, *vile*, *loathsome*, *foul*, intolerable, *obnoxious*, sickening.

Now, after having gone together through some synonyms and related concepts of the words *mature* and *adult*, we have, on the one hand, *duly careful* and *adequate*, *experienced* and *knowledgeable*, *intelligent* and *understanding*, *wise*, *judicious* and *sagacious*, *rational*, *reasonable* and *thoughtful*, *sensible* and *prudent*, and above

all, **perfect**, which is *blameless in morals or behavior*. On the other hand, we have *shameless* and *repellent*, *repulsive* and *revolting*, *disgusting* and *repugnant*, *abhorrent* and *loathsome*, *nasty* and *foul*, *unpleasant* and *sickening*, *intolerable*, *vile* and *hideous*, and all of them mean to be **adult**. So, actually, no matter what you choose you will still be an adult person. Doesn't it sound as irrational as the behavior of grown-up people is? The meaning of these words is so confusing, perplexing, and what is most painful, contradictory, that it makes me want to ask: "Where is logic? Where is sense? What are children to do? Which way should they go?" Should they step into the grown-up world, where people intoxicate body and mind, smoke, drink and copulate like animals, and become part of it? Should they step into the world where nowadays there is no good, there is no evil, everything exists and everything is accepted, where the term '*wrong*' will die out soon? Should they step into this world of mass dementia?

To my mind, the grown-up world is about learning how to live right, learning to see true beauty of things around us, learning to see the inner beauty of people, disregarding their looks, about learning to see life, life as it is supposed to be, with no crime, violence and endless suffering, especially of those who least deserve to suffer.

There should be constant intellectual and spiritual development! We should stop believing that the mass media are very conducive to our intellectual development! We have to think, feel and learn! And

if we don't like to learn, we have to learn to love to learn.

The problem is that every person thinks that he or she is not the cause of the problems that corrode society and thus the world as a whole, and that this cause lies somewhere else, that some external conditions are the cause of all the trouble. But let me reveal a small secret to you: *The problem lies in us*, each of us, because there are two crimes that each of us has committed at least once. These are *being ignorant* and *being indifferent*. And the impossibility to heal the world lies in these two major weaknesses, which in their turn lie in us. So if we are to heal the world, we have to fight these weaknesses. And if these weaknesses lie in us, we must fight ourselves.

We have to change the nature of a human being. There is something wrong with us, and this something, some sort of discord lies within us. We have to learn to rid ourselves of this something that makes us so imperfect by learning to create some kind of inner harmony which will lead us to harmony in actions. But we cannot do this by means of technology. The origin of this wrong is not physical, but very intangible, though it creates numerous very physical and tangible problems for ourselves and those around us. We have to fight it by other means.

First of all, you have to resist evil, everything which is evil. Of course, it is hard to be good nowadays. Everything around you is evil. It is like epidemic which

has infected everyone. Although it is easier to join the flow and be like everyone else, one must strive to live justly. However, people don't like to look at themselves critically. Please, don't say: "I am not bad, I don't do anything bad, and there many others who are worse." You forget that *to be good does not mean not to do bad, but to do good*; otherwise, you stay neutral. Your battle against yourself or your work on yourself should begin from both ends: you should stop doing what you are not supposed to do and start doing what you are supposed to. You must stop doing what is wrong and start doing what is right.

But people worry too much about what others say about them. "What if I do something they don't do and don't expect me to?" This is the major fault in people's psychology, that is, to always fear to be criticized and reproached. We should rather think of what God thinks of us. This thought should be the basis of our thinking and behavior.

When a change took place in me, people were saying: "Oh, you've become so faithful! How come?" It is not even about faith. It is about understanding of such things as those told by such people like Muhammad, Buddha, Jesus and others. It is about understanding that there is so much truth and wisdom in what they have said. And if they actually were here, and according to all the evidence, they certainly were, how can I allow myself to neglect their words? How can I neglect their message which was left by them definitely not for their own sake? What if all they

said is true? What then? Have you ever thought of it? Well, if you haven't, now you are. What if there some kind of hell in a hereafter? What if there is a reward for being righteous and punishment for being unrighteous? Don't you fear anything? What makes you disregard what they said so easily? They meant what they said.

Jesus said: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."

"Whoever, on account of perverted views, scorns the Teaching of the Perfected Ones, the Noble and Righteous Ones – that fool, like the bamboo, produces fruits only for self-destruction." said Buddha.

"Give generously for the cause of Allah and do not cast yourselves into destruction by your own hands." spoken Muhammad in the Koran.

What probably many people think is that it was true then, back in the days, when people were cruel, violent and bloodthirsty. They think their message is irrelevant today. But I exhort you to think more about our behavior; pay more attention to our mode of life, search for the truth more carefully and mindfully. And after having done this, it will not be hard to see how many mistakes we make and have always made, how relevant words of the greatest and wisest teachers are now, and how much truth their message contains, has always contained and will contain eternally.

However, there are people who ask something like: “What is truth? Who is to define what is good and what is bad? Everything is relative and everything is controversial. Truth is something which one establishes for oneself.” The problem is that everyone has become so smart nowadays, I would say, even *too* smart, that he thinks and, in fact, is convinced that he knows so much that he is qualified to dispute and defy everything, even what he has no notion about. And especially *those are most liberal* about their views *who are doing fine*, whose life is filled with no drama and no real pain, who don’t know what it feels like to starve, what it feels like to be beaten down and raped, what it feels like to see your family being tortured and killed; those who don’t know what it feels like to suffer. Of course, it is easy to ignore all that is happening all over the world when you feel comfortable and nothing really bothers you. And it is nice to philosophize about nihilism and relativism and live according to the ideology “That’s true for you but not for me” when you stay in a cozy place. But why not ask which philosophy is capable of making things right for everyone? Why not contemplate about whose ideas would have better outcome if applied? Is it not philosophy of love, compassion and help of those who dedicated all their lives to teaching and exhorting people to be good and do good?

Religion is the cradle of such philosophy, which is divine. The very essence of religion is the philosophy of love and brotherhood among all men. We should

learn to look through rites, ceremonies and customs. We should learn to look through ways people pray, worship God and by what name they call Him. We should learn to look through it all to see that His philosophy, and the one we must follow, is not discord, nor fight, nor violence. It is love and oneness. Do not worship Him, but obey Him; your obedience will be the perfect service and worship.

We are still unable to see the truth, although it has been spread everywhere. I am talking about the sacred books of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc. *The truth is right there*, but for some inexplicable reason, we cannot see it. We simply cannot notice it. We dare to talk about the truth and utter the most sacred words without having the slightest idea of what they are. We print these books, distribute them, sell them and even read them, but, nevertheless, still don't get the meaning. Quite sad, isn't it?

Let us turn to people of so-called religious authority. Do you think they live according to the truth or according to something *they call* 'the truth'? Do you really think they know what they talk about?

How foolish you sound when you talk about something you don't know! It is like me talking about physics or chemistry. If I don't know a thing about it, I just keep silent. I cannot use scientific terms that are virtually alien to me. The same goes for people who talk about religion. But they would never admit that they sound ridiculous.

If we take a closer look at people who are closely related to religion; people who work in churches, mosques, synagogues, etc. and who speak in the name of their religions, we would see something truly amazing.

But first, let us use our imagination. If my 10-year-old niece comes to me and asks me questions about physics hoping that I will help her, I simply cannot let her down, and in order not to look silly I will be telling her anything just to make her believe that I know the subject. Thus, not having any idea of what I am talking about I will misinform the pure child who put her trust in me. And instead of receiving real knowledge about physics she will know some matters or facts in the form in which I have presented them to her, and which I have made up on the spot.

The same is true for people closely associated with religion. Not having actually comprehended the truth themselves, they keep teaching it to us. They keep instilling into our minds something they don't even understand. We put our trust in them, look up to them and hope for their help. And what do we get in return? We get a distorted idea of what we hope for. They make it even harder for us. These so-called men of God misrepresent the truth by their own behavior, leading us so much astray, that following their words and advice we will be even further from the truth than before we approached these people.

Supposedly, these people have spent their whole

lives over the sacred scriptures, learning them and teaching their meaning to us. Nevertheless, they lead lives of contradiction: They talk to us about compassion and love for your neighbor and at the same time go on living in big houses, wearing expensive garments, establish all types of businesses, make CD's and DVD's about the Word of God and *selling* them, literally prospering on 'being holy' – and this all in the midst of pain, suffering and poverty. Maybe living in luxury they think that these iniquities do not exist any longer? These atrocities are still here. They have never really vanished out of our lives. They all still prevail and thrive. And these 'men of God' are those who are supposed to serve people who are in need, support them, console them; *they should give the little they've got to the needy, because this is exactly what they teach.* Or what? Is there nobody with whom they could share their wealth? Is there nobody to whom they could give shelter in their houses? Is there nobody to whom they could give some money instead of spending it on another expensive suit? They tell us about being strong in spirit, but somehow are not willing to give up commodities and an abundant life.

Of course, they themselves and others would say that they are not angels, they are only humans. Then if you are, *stop acting holy!* It is already irritating! It hurts our senses to hear and see your hypocrisy! Stop speaking about something you don't know! Don't teach us God's Word if you don't understand it yourselves! At times, these people hiding under the veil of holy

image are those who do the nastiest and dirtiest things; they let vices into their souls and drown in the pool of moral decadence, overpowered by lust, greed and pride.

If we are not to be critical about extreme things, let us take a look at something that is less conspicuous. What about tolerance? What about loving your neighbor and not hating him? They sanctify soldiers who go to war. Do you understand that 'to sanctify' means 'to free from sin'? Do you believe one man can free another from sin? Do you think it is possible to be freed from sin *by men*, and especially from such sins as *murder*? Or is this used to soothe soldiers' feelings, mitigating guilt and tearing pain that might be later caused by conscience if they realize what they have done? They give their blessings to soldiers who go to war to exterminate 'their neighbors' while they, themselves criticize the religion of people with whom they are at war with deep contempt and indignation. I guess they forgot Jesus' words: "But I say to you, *love your enemies*, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you".

I am constantly asking myself how *stupid* one should be, having reread 'Do unto others what you will have them do to you' hundreds of times and even after having preached it to others still misunderstand the meaning of this message? You've got to be the most slow-witted on the planet Earth. Even mentally retarded people live more according to the truth than

those who preach it. They might not have a strong intellect to understand the message of the sacred books, but at least they listen to something else, to the voice of conscience that guides them and which is inside each of us. As to the ministry or clergy, they use neither intellect nor follow their conscience though they probably talk about both the most. They would rather let something else guide them, something like greed, cowardice and pragmatism.

Why is it religious people, no matter which religion they belong to, welcome you and are super-nice to you when you show inquisitiveness and interest in their religion and in whoever they worship, and the moment you ask them about other religions and whether they would like to closely interact with people of these religions, they give you a false smile and try to twist everything up with their crooked sayings? Not willing to listen to your arguments about how close and alike we all are, no matter whether we follow teachings of Muhammad or Jesus, they instantly block something inside and, as Socrates put it, “only striving quarrelsomely... pursue simply a verbal opposition to what is uttered”. When you exhort them to unite and do good together, they say it cannot work this way. First, I have to accept Jesus as God’s Son and my Savior, or Muhammad as the Messenger and Allah as my God, and *only then* I can do the right thing. They say they are filled with Godly Spirit, which gives them more strength; hence, they can do more than I can, the one who did not accept *their* God, who has only

very little, *human* strength. When I suggest that they combine their strength with mine, so we can have an even better result, they tell me it can't work together. Why?

Why are you, people, separate when you have to be united? Why do you, no matter who you are or what you are, constantly waste your energy by dispersing it? Isn't it better to accumulate it in one reaction that would energize the entire world with positiveness and goodness?

You always talk about doing good, living the good, trying to reach peace of mind and soul. This is not the peace and composure that you've got to have when you watch TV or eat your dinner. This is peace that you should possess when you are criticized, insulted, or even hurt. This is peace of mind and soul which enables you to sacrifice yourself for the sake of others if needed. Since being religious or claiming to be religious is a huge task, a very serious obligation which one must carry out once taken.

Nowadays, religion is something very nominal. It has completely lost its meaning. People simply like to classify themselves and others. They like to belong to a certain group. Just as we have tribes, peoples, nations, in the same way, religion serves us as another class or division, but simply on another scale and one which embodies civilizations. So mostly when people claim that they are Muslims, Christians or Hindus, basically they are telling us to which civilization they

belong, rather than in whom they believe, or what their principles or moral values are. And this is a real fact! You may know everything, imagine, literally everything, about all major religions, and when a person nowadays tells you that he is a Muslim or a Christian, you will still not know much about him or his views. You will not be able to say for sure that he has a negative opinion regarding smoking, drinking, fornication or committing adultery. He may be a Muslim that gets drunk every Friday night after he has been to mosque. He may be a Christian who can cheat on his wife with another woman on Sunday evening after he has been to church earlier that morning.

The true meaning of religion, of any of them, has been misinterpreted, misunderstood and wrongly introduced to those who still seek salvation. That is why all Muslims are seen as terrorists and suicide bombers and Islam as a religion perpetrating violence. That is why all Jews are seen as greedy and mercenary. That is why onlookers see the Christian West as a place where, as Nietzsche put it, 'God is dead'. And that is why wishing to believe sincerely and impartially some people don't know what to turn to; everything seems to be fake, merely nice words and well-sounding exclamations. People get disappointed, lose their faith in goodness and the world goes down.

No doubt there will be many who will criticize what I have written. They will claim that whatever has just been said is absurd; that such a thing could be written only by a mentally deranged person. They

will declare that religion, even in its present form or as we know it, is a beautiful thing, giving sense to lives of people, lightening their way and serving as the best means for reaching the common good and the general improvement of people's lives. But let me make something clear to you: No one tries to disparage and blacken religion. The critique is about *people*, not religion. Religion teaches us to love one another, help one another, respect one another, but people do what they want.

Everybody is so deeply religious, everybody worships the Creator, and still everything is so messed up and the world still seems to be a very gloomy place to be. Why is that?

Seemingly there are two types of countries in our world. The first type is countries which are generalized with the name of a major religion, but in fact are secular. Such countries have problems like crime, violence, drug addicts, child molesters, rapists and so on, because they do not have any serious attitude towards religion, so, actually, there is no moral law, that could prevent them from living so. They have chosen to worship money and live for material riches, and at least they succeed in approaching their idol, that is money, and material prosperity.

The second type is those countries which claim to be very religious states. Except for few Muslim states that are lucky enough to be rich in oil, they are all underdeveloped or developing countries, or,

more clearly if less tactfully, poor and uncivilized. It is not that they care only for their spiritual side and neglect their material prosperity, and that is why they cannot get rid of poverty and illiteracy. It is not that they have turned into ascetics who detach themselves from the world. It is because stagnation, corruption and violence are killing these countries, though their religions oblige them to be industrious, incorruptible and peaceful, which would consequently eliminate all evil and lead them to perfection. What's happened then?

As I have already said: Religion (be it Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism) and its message have been distorted and misunderstood. Present religious leaders, instead of doing their work of presenting religion, misrepresent it and mislead us. I am not saying that I am against religion or against God. Religion is beautiful! It is the only thing that keeps us afloat. Take religion and the morality that stems from it away, and the world would sink immediately. I am against a travesty of religion. I am against any distortion of the true meaning of it. And I am against those who distort the truth.

The truth undoubtedly exists. We simply ignore it, resulting in the present state of the world which we cannot ignore any longer. Why not accept the truth and thereby reverse the course of the events that have been taking place recently? They say: "The truth is out there". And I am saying to you that the truth is *right here*, in such scriptures like the Koran,

the Dhammapada, the Bible and many others which teach you and me to live righteously, which means in an upright, moral way in accordance with virtue and morality which is unique to all of us. So all you have to do is pick up this truth and live according to it. And if everyone did so, it would take humanity to the next level; it would lead us all to real progress, not mere change from a wooden table to a glass one or from a steam locomotive to a high-speed train; it would elevate us to completely new heights. Don't argue and don't display your stubbornness! Just follow what teachers like Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, or even Socrates, Leo Tolstoy or Gandhi urge you to do. Even though it seems hard and at times impossible to adhere to their teachings, there is beauty that lies beyond overcoming all seeming hardships these teachings embody. And if you don't put any effort in overcoming these hardships, you will never be able to take a peek at what is beyond it, as you are not able to take a peek at what is beyond a high concrete wall if you stand in front of it, not daring to surmount it.

Lies, deceit, fraud, hypocrisy and contradiction, misrepresentation and distortion of the truth, inconsistency between words and deeds – such is our life in its present state. Such terms as Wisdom, Justice and Temperance are no more. Especially, the latter, that is, temperance is completely omitted in our lives, as if unnecessary.

Is temperance really something we should not follow? Simply imagine that you want much, I want

much and each of us wants as much as possible. We have it all in our minds and cherish these thoughts about gaining more and more, because we think it will make us happier. You and I, both of us, think that happiness is there, in having more. So we stand side by side wishing for the same thing, but not being aware of what each of us is thinking and dreaming about. We are nice and courteous to each other, because we don't know what is on each other's mind. Now let a brand new car be placed between us and someone tells us: "You may have it". Aren't we going to have a conflict now because we basically wish for the same thing? Aren't we going to have an argument because neither of us is ready to give up this car? Aren't we in conflict now?

This is what, in principle, happens every day. We all stand side by side smiling to each other and being nice and kind, but we all forget that we want the same thing, that is, all, and as much as possible. So the moment we collide and become aware of the fact that we want the same, we are in conflict. Hence, there is this race, this competition into which we are born, where each is trying to get as much credit as possible. It is like a team where everyone plays for himself and tries to score as much as possible so that he will get all the credit. The final result is that the whole team loses. Mankind is the same team, which also loses, when each of us tries to become the most affluent, the most prosperous, the most, the most, the most... Instead of working and winning together, one undermines another and vice versa, and then we *all* lose.

And then you wonder why we are not happy... Our whole mode of life is wrong that is why absolute happiness is still not reached. That, what we are used to calling 'happiness', is everything but happiness. Probably we should come up with another word that could substitute what we call 'happiness' with real happiness. Most surely the latter exists; we just haven't learnt to search for it right, that is why we never find it. We are in pursuit of something else, thinking though, that we are on the right path. Sex, money, parties, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, jewelry, luxury is where we look for happiness. It is never there though. It is like a mirage that you can chase for life and never reach it. The same is true about this sick idea to always purchase something new. To buy a new dress or shoes, another car or a new house, appropriate land or make a new business deal – are these all going to make you endlessly, or at least long enough, happy? Those things have no eternal value. They are material things. All material comes sooner or later to an end, and not to a happy one. These things are nothing; just as nothing as you are when your whole life is based on gaining and acquiring material possessions. And when you love material things, and live for them, and are driven by them all, your end will be no different than that of the material. As Pausanias said (in "Symposium" by Plato): "...for he is not lasting since he loves a thing not lasting".

By constant acquisition of new goods, people naively believe that it will change them and thereby

bring them closer to happiness. Is it true? Will it significantly change you and make you happier? –No way. You will still be as acquisitive and as greedy as you are now. It is never able to quench your thirst and longing for true happiness. How I want you to understand that it is only an illusion that when you get something you have always desired, you become happy. It is not human nature to stop. We always want more. The more we get, the more we want.

The prophet Muhammad gave you the answer a long time ago when he said: “Riches are not from an abundance of worldly goods, but from a contented mind.” We should learn to be content with little. And this is the thing that millions of people are becoming aware of. But millions in comparison to billions is still a very small number, especially when billions make use of the self-abnegation that millions try to exercise. These billions of people are pulling everyone down.

Our insatiable appetite endangers all of humanity. Our consumption of everything in unreasonable measures cannot last any longer. And a beautiful work by Yann Arthus-Bertrand entitled ‘Home’ can make it even clearer to you than my words.

Every rational person should understand the emptiness and senselessness of constant pursuit of material riches, and then make sure that he makes those, who still act irrationally in this respect, understand it as soon as possible too.

What is most hateful is that people think that they change because they acquire something. Therefore they should be reminded that when they acquire anything, *only their property* changes, *not them*. They are still the same. Your essence is still the same. Making riches can help you make experiences, that will shape your character in a way; but it will never change you as a person. Only quantity changes: a lot money, a lot clothes, a lot of everything, but no real change in quality, in *your* quality, your quality as person, a human being. If you were rotten, you will still be rotten, and no money or luxury will help you to get rid of this rottenness.

Unfortunately, we all so misunderstand what it means to be human. We think money and technology will make us more human than the development of our inner side? We, people, quit thinking.

We say we try so hard to change the world, we try so hard to make it work; we try so hard but it is still not working. Maybe we are doing the wrong work? Why don't we turn to the other side, to our *inner* side? Why don't we search for the cause of all this mess in ourselves? It is there, beyond doubt. As I have already said, there are two crimes that each of us has committed at least once; these are being indifferent and being ignorant. Each and every one of us is guilty of these crimes. And if we take a look at what is happening all over the globe we will see that these two are major factors of global disharmony. *The indifference of the rich* and *the ignorance of the poor*

work consistently and restlessly from both ends and make a living paradise impossible. These two are also called spiritual and intellectual stagnation and they seemingly take us further from our common goal.

It is not hard to understand why the poor are not willing to learn and develop. When you have a low-paid job and hardly make ends meet, and you see that others have money and power, all this in some magical way makes you feel so small and weak that you stop considering yourself a dignified person, thus stop believing in yourself and your ability to change something about the situation you are in and rise above the morass. Moreover, as in many cases, when your life is unbearable and hunger and suffering are experienced on a daily basis, it becomes quite problematic to bear in mind thoughts regards some intellectual development, I suppose. Such thoughts as “Am I going to survive?” or “When will it all end?” block all other thoughts. This I can understand. What I can’t understand is why it is problematic for the rich to think of someone who is in need. What holds them back from thinking about the poor? Comfort or thought-up and imagined problems? Is it really so hard when it is raining cats and dogs or is freezing cold outside and you sit in a warm cozy place to think of others that might be there outside without roofs over their heads?

Why don’t we respect the poor? Why don’t we respect the homeless? These people are not bad, and they are definitely not worse than us. We don’t know

what's happened to them. Maybe they have stayed behind because they simply couldn't catch up with us. Maybe this system that is so inhumane and exhausting was too much for them.

Have you ever thought about how we act when we pass a beggar? We act as if he was an inanimate object, as if he did not exist, completely ignoring the fact that he or she is *a human being*, just as we are. And why do we act so? Because deep inside we feel that by not helping him we do something wrong. We see him, but we are not looking at him, and definitely not into his eyes. Feelings of shame make us turn our eyes away. Moreover, we teach our children not to stare at homeless people. Why not stare? Don't you stare at something that is abnormal? And this *is* something abnormal when man lives on the street and looks so as if he hadn't been taken care of for years. Our children stare at them thereby giving us a hint that this is abnormality, and we teach them to turn a blind eye to it.

Is it really so hard to try to empathize with them for a minute? Is it really so hard to feel what they are going through?

When you want to understand it better, try this: when you see a homeless person who is down there on the street, (let's not imagine a drunk or a beggar, but let us think of) a poor old woman who could be your grandma who is not begging but is standing there near the dumpster and picking out some food waste

(which is quite a regular scene in the former Soviet Union countries). When you see that, try to stay with her in your mind, try to imagine how it tastes, what she feels; maybe shame and pain that she is forced to do what she is doing, or maybe fear and embarrassment? Stay with her in your mind and follow her; follow her to her old about-to-collapse house where it might be just as cold inside as outside, where there's no food, no water, no gas or maybe even no electricity because she can't afford to pay for it, where she's all alone, staying there day by day, with no shoulder to cry on, where at night, cold and hungry, she goes to bed, lies there in the darkness and thinks. What do you think she is thinking? What do you think she feels? Loneliness, anguish, deep disappointment, hopelessness, fear? Or all of these at once, that turn into an awful intolerable feeling that tears apart your soul and makes you want to die? Do you feel what she does? How does it feel?

Once you've felt it, remember this feeling and never let it leave you. It might be awful, but it can make you happier. First, it melts your heart and by making you more humane and compassionate makes you a better person. Second, it helps you to treasure the little that you have and helps you to feel happiness and gratitude at the most mundane moments of your life; life that will seem to you millions of times more wonderful than before and that will be filled with love and eagerness to help, thus acquiring a true purpose.

The world by itself is a beautiful place to be. *We* make it so evil. *Within* – this is where the cause of all

evil is! And *within* – this is where the solution lies! All we have to do is to enrich ourselves from within. We are very poor inside. They say that inner growth starts with compassion. However, although we are so advanced and developed, as my friend Melissa put it: “The word ‘compassion’ is not familiar to us.” It is sad, but is something that is very true. Nevertheless, any spiritual development and efforts to attain moral perfection become an idle exercise if loving compassion is not practiced. I had to learn this through my own experience and I am grateful to the One who opened my eyes.

If we paid more attention to our inner world and tried to beautify ourselves more from within than from without, there would be hardly any problems in our lives. Everything could be much better, much easier if we took a closer look inside us. The thing is that we don’t even deny the existence of our inner world. Most people consider themselves something more than just an object, ascribing spiritual side to their material side. And knowing that it does exist, we just neglect this fact and let this inner world and the possibilities its development could give us, slumber. It is like having the ability to fly and being unwilling to learn how to. What scares people off inner development is uncertainty and abstractness of the work they have to undertake. It seems hard. It seems as though you have to flip your life upside down and begin a tough, backbreaking and burdensome project of self-observation and self-discipline. As

they say in Russia: “Eyes fear, hands do.” In this case, hands don’t do much, but the hardness of this work is overestimated. It is in no way easy, but fear and weakness are gone as one acts, especially when one understands the significance of his actions and later on takes pleasure in overcoming difficulties one by one.

“Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11

I am not the one to tell you about the right path and the signs which can help you to see that you are on it. But when you start working on yourself and growing above yourself, you will realize that you worry more about others than about yourself. Most of the time we are concerned primarily with ourselves. Even when we have other people in mind, these thoughts are mostly of some selfish character; either we dream of these people, daydream or cherish thoughts of them – it is all because we are in the center and these people’s lives revolve around us and are connected to ours in a way. But I am talking about someone who may not even know you; you don’t feel any physical attraction to him or her; you are not infatuated; you are not connected; you just want to help this person, simply because you care. How often does it happen in your lives? The moment you take your thoughts away from yourself and look unto the world *consciously*, and thereby I mean when your consciousness is at least

a bit awake, you will see a truer picture of what is happening around you; you will see that your troubles are ludicrous in comparison to some people's living nightmare. You will see the senselessness of your worries about what you are going to wear today and them alike, and you will see that probably there is someone who truly needs you. You will start living people's lives in your mind, putting yourself into their shoes, identifying yourself with them. You simply won't be able to ignore those whom you could help and turn away from them as you did before. And most important is that by feeling all this and softening your heart, and thereby by no means your character, you sense the indivisibility and oneness of all that exists, including you.

Talking about oneness, we can refer to a beautiful metaphor by Socrates who compared oneness with a body; if pain is felt in one part of it, the whole body is disturbed by this pain. Unfortunately, we do not really seem to be disturbed by the fact that someone suffers. Very often we call mankind one big family and God our Father. But when someone, even on a different continent, is hurt or in need, we do not really rush to provide them with help, and can easily, without any twinge of conscience afford to arrange something as nasty as a Love Parade which by its very existence denigrates the concept of Love. If you knew that someone of your family, your mom or your brother, has got into trouble and is hurt now, would you be able to go on doing some trifling things and ignoring your

relatives' pain? If we are one big family, why don't we drop everything that makes no sense and make haste to protect and support our brothers and sisters all over the world?

If you don't step back and keep on growing, you will get to the point where you will have the sensation that your knowledge has essentially grown but at the same time you will be disquieted by the sensation that you don't know anything, which constantly replaces your misconception that you know a great deal. It is like you realize that you know less, but somehow you know more; you see less, but somehow you see more, what is most necessary. It is hard to perfectly explain it, but it feels like the world, the one we are used to, the societal one, is no longer a mystery to you, because you understand that it is artificial, made-up, and apparently made-up falsely and imperfectly. You see it and you know it, as clearly as possible. And you have this strange fear not to lose yourself; not in society, not in the eyes of crowd, but you are afraid to lose your soul, something you have always had, but have always ignored as non-existent, and now you are in a rush to take care of it before it is too late. But to your deepest regret, you don't know how to. You try to look beyond the made-up world. You long for true knowledge, the real knowledge, for something that is eternal and the essence of all. You look for the truth... and don't where to go.

How often do we think? Do we think? Or we just think we think? Our whole mode of life is mere fleeting

elusion. We run away from the question of *what we are here for*. We know some theories and conjectures regarding our existence, but we don't stress ourselves in finding the answer. I am very sure that 99% of people all over the world *don't* even *realize* the fact that they *don't know why* they walk the Earth, *the reason* they were made. Nobody knows it! If we did realize this fact, we would be very frightened and confused. I am not saying we must find out why we are here, or that we are able to do that. No, I don't even imply it. All I am saying is that, after having realized that you don't know the answer to this one small question and can't even possibly find it, how much you know or whatever you know does not matter; it simply doesn't. You may know everything, be a specialist in different sciences and a super-intelligent person, but this one tiny question, when you realize with full clear consciousness that you don't know the answer to it, should lead you into a state of complete bewilderment and perplexity, in a situation that, what you can best do is to humble yourself.

Let's admit the fact that we don't know anything. That little that we know can hardly be called 'knowledge'. In addition, whatever we know is everything, but the most essential. "Do you suppose there is any gain possessing everything in the world without possessing the good? Or to understand everything in the world except the good? – to understand nothing of the beautiful and the good?" said Socrates.

We suggest to each other that we know much and have been doing that for centuries. What do we know – numbers, words, and a couple of sciences? Even philosophy, science, religion and art are nowadays separated, one trying to refute the other, undermining the authority of one another and thereby puzzling us even more, when all of them should be directed towards easing our lives and helping us at least to approach the answer. We act as if we were everything and our acts, most honorable and above reproach. And the more educated we are, the more blinded we become by the misconception: “Now I know much.” What is even worse is that the more educated we become, the more we let ourselves part from God and the invisible world around us thinking that everything is clear and we are in control of everything. Now if everything is clear and you are in control of everything, tell me: “What is death? And why can’t you even possibly save yourself from it?” You can watch over yourself days and nights, organize the best guardians for your protection, install security cameras as you like, and still Death will come to you unnoticed, though not by stealth but openly, to steal the most precious treasure you’ve got – your soul. And nothing will or can stop it.

We are so arrogant, conceited, pompous and pretentious. What is wrong with you? Did you forget the time when you were just a kid? Then try to recall it! Remember how much you knew back then! Did you know much? Now 30, 40, 50 years later you think you

know much more? -Think school systems taught you the most essential things? – gave you the baggage of knowledge that will be sufficient for your whole life? Do you think you’ve already learnt what is most important? You were a kid, and now you’ve grown up. How much do you know? And even a more essential question – *What* do you know? Is it a true knowledge that beyond any doubt exists, or a pseudo-knowledge that just comforts you and distracts you as soon as you try to awake?

We have to drop this role of omniscient beings which we’ve been ascribing to ourselves. Let’s humble ourselves to the level where we realize that we are just people, not gods, simply people. I am not saying we have to dishonor ourselves. I am talking about humility. What is dishonoring us is the state we live in, which is definitely animalistic. We literally “disdignify” ourselves. So on one hand, we are just people, who think too much of themselves; on the other hand, we are People, who are beautiful and gorgeous, who can be artistic, creative and inventive. However, if humility and dignity, that can be well combined, are not there, we will bring mankind to a nullity. Pride, greed, envy, lust, sloth, plus drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and all types of perversion that the sexual revolution has given rise to are like dirt that has stuck to us, has covered us and slows down our pace. Should we shake it off and rid ourselves of it for good, we would move much faster and sooner reach all we strive for. By taking control over our minds and bodies, we take control of our souls. And then all becomes much easier.

What is quite interesting is that people want to live happily without putting any effort into achieving this goal. They want to keep on living just as they do presently and have a happy world; and they naively suppose that it is possible. They should be reminded that in order to get something, you have to give something. Some even say 'if you want to be given everything, give everything up'. This is how it goes. Reaching a high goal honestly and honorably is possible only by hard and steady work towards it. Something has got to be made clear to all of us: no one will come and make this place a better place to live in for us; no one will come and say: "Here it is, a happy world, as you wished and prayed for. You can have it." I am not trying to ridicule the act of praying, by no means. Prayer has something strong and very effective in itself, especially when it is uttered with pure intentions and sincerely. It shouldn't be out loud; it might be uttered in your heart. I just think it is up to us, all of us, to act towards turning our dream into reality. And even when you pray and believe that someone hears your prayers, don't you think that this Someone expects something from you? You expect Him to answer your prayers. And He doesn't expect anything; not even that you carry out the duties and obligations He imposed on you? Who serves whom? "...it is my duty to serve the Lord, and not His to serve me", wrote Tolstoy. Don't you think we owe Him, in a way?

This is something that shocks me and puzzles me

most: People who pray to God definitely believe in His existence. They hope or know that He is somewhere there, hears their prayers and watches over them. Then what I don't understand is - How can these people go on living the way they do if they know He is there; it doesn't matter whether up there, down there or among us; the fact that He *is*? Do you understand what I mean? How can you, knowing that God exists and watches over you, neglect this, what He demands from you, and ignore the fact that He might not be very satisfied with your conduct? Do you realize what you are doing? To my mind, if one is a true believer, he must drop all things secular and dedicate his whole life to the service of God. By saying 'service' I don't mean church service or something similar. I do not. I mean your service in honoring His Word, following his teachings and living as it was prescribed you to. Do not do it in fear, but do it because you revere Him. If all who call themselves believers and religious people served God, Allah or whatever you call Him, not outwardly – by that I mean performance of routine rites, rituals, and ceremonies – but inwardly – their work on the inside, constant examining themselves and their actions with close scrutiny and studious work to excel at their common task – there would be no conflicts, no rivalry, no violence or war in this world.

If you wish to change something, start with yourself and work hard to reach the goal that you've set for yourself.

It is not enough to stop intoxicating your body and mind. It is not enough simply to take these things out of your life and let the gaps it leaves remain unfilled. You have to think. Please, think! Do not daydream and imagine that you are thinking. Think, in full sense of this word. Reason! Use and exercise your mind! Think about what makes you live so. Think about what makes you commit evil. Isn't it your pride, self-love and at times self-pity? Don't you think we love ourselves too much? Have you ever contemplated whether you really *are* as good a person as you think you are? Think reasonably, impartially and justly whether you deserve to be loved as much as you love yourself. Think of all your flaws, all the mistakes you've made, people you've hurt and pain you've caused even unconsciously. Would you be able to love the same way, willing to give to and do so much as you do for yourself for someone just like you? I am not saying it is bad to love yourself. Just try to love yourself a bit less and let the rest of your love embrace others.

Think of people, not only of yourself! Maybe you spend too much time caring about yourself and neglecting those who are around you? Maybe you are going to regret it, and these regrets will be intolerably painful? Or maybe, when you are not distracted and left all by yourself, you will spend sleepless nights in sadness and sorrow over things that you did not do and, also very often, did?

What I see very well is that people do not understand the shortness of their lives, they do not

understand that the time they die is near; it is closer than they think, and *it is inevitable*. They waste their time, they do trifling, meaningless things and their energy is wasted in the most unproductive and futile way possible. Sometimes I think that in order to approach Wisdom, one simply needs to realize and *feel* that he or she is not eternal, that his or her life is fleeting pseudo-reality, that all we see and touch is transient and very, I repeat, *very* short.

Imagine you die tonight, or any other minute. Imagine it and try to feel it with all your senses. But really, feel it! When I say 'Feel it' I mean something different than just experiencing a vague fugitive sensation. Let it permeate your body, reach each and every corner of your mind, let it touch your soul, your real you, your essence. Now think how wonderful it is to live, breathe in fresh air, look around and see all these colors, flowers, grass, the sky, hear the singing of birds, feel the bliss of life, see its beauty, taste the sweetness of it.

What makes us think that we are going to live forever? What is it that makes us feel so infallible and believe that our lives are never going to end? Look around, look at people, look at how they live and behave, look what they make of themselves and their lives. Do you think the world would be as it is if people learnt to love life and appreciate it? People walk, talk, act, eat, sleep, then wake up and do the same over again; they do things, say things and this all without the slight understanding that with each minute they

get closer to the end. Do you think they sense that soon they are to die? Would they do what they do now if they felt that their days are numbered?

What about *you*? Do you understand that you will die? Do you realize it? I am not talking about 'knowing' that you'll die. Do you *feel* it? There is no suitable explanation to perfectly convey the meaning of my words, but *do you realize and sense with your whole being that you will die?*

When we go somewhere for a month, or two weeks, we do not really feel at home, because we know that soon we'll have to leave. However, things become different and it feels much better when we know that we are going to reside there forever, especially when the place is nice. We feel secure and there is no need to worry.

But this is not the case! Not here! *Your stay here is not permanent.*

No matter how much you like being here, no matter how much you've got accustomed to it and you feel home, you will have to leave. You are scared, overwhelmed by fear and troubled by not knowing where you are heading to, but *you have to go*. Nothing will let you avoid this common fate of all of us. You love life, otherwise you would have long ago killed yourself; you like to be here, you like this place, you like what it gives you, you have your family here, your friends, people that you like to see and enjoy spending

your time with. Everything that you've got here is precious to you and you love it. But remember: You've got to go! You will die!

My intention is not to scare or dispirit you. My intention is to open your eyes and let you understand that you should live more consciously. You may not waste your life if you love it, you may not kill time that you do not have, you may not neglect those who you love and who soon will have to go, as well.

What about showing our emotions? What about learning to express them? We are not stones, we are *living* beings. If you feel something and know that it is positive, learn to express it, share it with others. Tell them what you feel. How often do you tell your parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and even your friends how much you love them? I don't mean something like: "Love you! Bye!" I mean a complete expression of it, though it seems that it may never be expressed completely, because love is enigma and is too big, strong and full of mystery for us. But when you say it, mean it! Mean it, when you say it! Look into the eyes of this person, try to see that he or she is *alive*, standing there, *in front of you*, maybe even smiling to you, crying or just looking at you, and realize that soon, sooner than you think, this person will be no more, never, nowhere and no more. Realize it, memorize the moment and enjoy it! Enjoy the time you can be so close to this person; touch or hug him or her and say "I love you and I thank you for everything, even for the fact that you are". Please, tell people who

are dear and close to you, be it your family or friends, all that you would tell them if you knew that tonight you die. Maybe you can't do something like that every time, but if you do it at least once in your life you will feel completely different.

We simply forget the closest people to us and act as if there were no end. And then when they are gone, you are standing there, not knowing what to do, looking around, searching for them or at least something that reminds you of them, you may want to go visit them, call them or write to them, but there is no way you can reach them; you can shout, scream, hit your head against the wall and even kill yourself, but that won't bring them back. There is no way. They are gone, they *are no more*.

It is strikingly painful to watch people find out that someone of their family or friends has just died, especially when it happens suddenly. The separation between these two is not on the physical level which might probably be explained as something habitual, that there is some kind of emptiness, when one is gone. This separation is on a different level, a level beyond all material; it is like one soul loses another and cannot realize it because it lives solely materially. You see, before, these two immaterial beings lived without giving any account of themselves to themselves, because they were not aware of themselves and the fact that they're actually placed in something material, something which is not eternal. They took everything for granted, didn't question anything and thought

everything was clear. They lived in material bodies without realizing it and that the end *is* there. And then, the moment one soul is gone forever, and what is worse, it is not clear where it has gone, the other soul being tremendously touched by this, is horrified, frightened and literally dazed by it. If you watched such a scene, you would definitely understand what I am talking about. When one person finds out about sudden death of the other, this person's strength leaves him and he almost collapses. It is not simply the body which collapses at this moment. It is like the other soul who tries to go after the one that is gone, but fails to, because it is not time yet. It is a state of absolute bewilderment and something unknown, something one cannot possibly grasp or comprehend. We do not know what it is. What is death?

What is life? What is it in you that makes you move, breathe, learn, feel, that makes you live? Is it just appropriate work of all your organs, the functioning of all your components? Is it? Ok, you've lost blood and now you're dead. You have just died. Why can't we pour some more blood into you so that you could live again? A car stopped because it ran out of gasoline; so we can fill it up even months later and it will work again. As to you, we were just seconds late and this something that made you live is gone. What is it? Why can't we find this vital element to revive you? Why couldn't we catch it? Where did it go? What is it that makes your body so incomplete, immovable and lifeless when this something is not there? Ah? What is this?

We don't know anything.

Life is the most precious gift. Its wonders are in each and every moment; we just haven't learnt to see it, treasure it and enjoy it. We don't even know its real value. How can we treat it so carelessly? Presently, life given to us is like a laptop given to a gorilla that doesn't know what to do with it.

What do we do with our lives? What do we do with the world? Nobody wants war, pain, misery, grief or agony. Why does it exist? Where does it come from? Not from people?

There must be no strife in life. An abundant life should be a norm, not a dream, a norm! All existing political systems should have long ago given everyone what they need, be it food, clothing, good living conditions and resources to be able to enjoy basic opportunities which life offers. However, none of the systems work, and *not one* of them *is able to work*, because no matter how good it may be, *people* are those who run it, *people* are those who participate in it, *people* are those who break the rules and constantly foul up because they always want more; and no system can provide you with limitless riches at no one's expense, so no one will suffer and everyone will be happy.

The whole world is sick! Not by itself! *We* are sick. There is no need to heal the world; there is a strong need to heal us, people, who cannot treasure what has been given to them.

We all wish for the same thing: we want to live in peace, freedom, equality, we want to be healthy and happy, we want to be respected and properly treated, we want to feel safe and protected. So how is it that we can't possibly take care of our own? Where is the collective action that had to be undertaken by us long time ago?

Each person can do at least a little something to ease somebody's pain. Don't say: "What can I do? I am just a human!" I hear no sound of dignity in this expression. You can do a lot, if you want to. Understand and feel that the very moment you are reading this now, somebody is deadly sick or starving, getting beaten, getting raped, maimed, tortured, killed; somebody wishes to die because he can't stand the pain. Please, don't ignore their pain! Don't chase these dark thoughts away. For many it is a dark reality. And the least you can do to prevent it from happening is simply stop being indifferent and be willing to help.

People, why do we waste time when we've got to get together and do something? Let's get serious!

What is this expression that I already mentioned before 'I am just a human'? When it is about being more rational and dutiful, then 'I'm just a human'. When it is about getting dead drunk, having fun all night long, doing nothing and living idly, then 'I'm a human, I have the right to do it'. And they're proud of living so. Where does this pride come from? Is it a side-effect of being a fool?

At times it makes me feel like taking these people by their shoulders, shaking them very well and telling them:” Wake up! You live in vain! Give your life some sense!”

Regretfully, we have become so weak that we try to justify each and every weakness and all of our desires just to slip away from our duties and responsibilities. At times we speak of ourselves as if we spoke of animals. All these terms Instinct, Reproduction, Rivalry are inconsonant with and disgrace the concept of man. We should speak more of Reason, Conscience, Soul, Truthfulness, Dutifulness. We should allow ourselves a higher value, which by no means allows us to kill and torture animals, devastate forests or pollute the atmosphere. Taking care of our planet – this is how our superiority should be displayed.

There is definitely something wrong with our attitude towards life, ourselves and all around us.

And feeling all that, being in all that and going through it all, we are still scared to break off the shackles of life that discomforts us so much, and go for more, for the life that we really deserve, for the life that does not, and, in truth, cannot promise anything bad, definitely nothing worse than what is known to us and seen by us now.

Life in its true form is not the way we have built it; it is not supposed to be this way. Although people don’t think it is possible to step outside these

boundaries, still somehow they feel that they might live otherwise, somehow they long for something else, something better, something more beautiful that they will never reach unless they are morally ripe and spiritually mature. And if they don't become so, they will never be happy, because they feel that they are made for more.

Progress and development should not embody big buildings, cars, airplanes, speed trains, etc. What's the use of all this if we still haven't learnt to treat each other properly? Or what's the use of all this so-called progress if not everyone can be a part of it? Somebody will be sitting hungry on the street watching all this progress pass him by. Does he need, then, such progress? A true development and growth should take place within ourselves, inside us. It should start with the understanding of who we really are and how we are supposed to live.

Shouldn't we reverse the current of events? Shouldn't we make it all different? Aren't we fed up with all this mess?

Let us learn to *see* others. Let us learn to give people some joy and happiness, especially to the old, the sick and the poor. Let us show that we care and our souls are not dead.

We should understand that we are inherently good. We were simply conditioned to be what we are. Look at little babies if you want to see it vividly. When you

look into their eyes, you will not see foolishness or stupidity. There will be purity and innocence, but no stupidity. Stupidity usually comes later. Their eyes are filled with clarity. There is no trace of evil in babies' souls. Their souls are pure and clean. Their eyes are looking at us with so much belief and so much hope, anticipating so much from us and the world they've just stepped into. They believe in us, put their trust in us, and we, without seeing it, callously and coldheartedly let them down. We break all their hopes, shatter their dreams and turn them into what we have become. We take a diamond for a stone and throw it unto a pile of such stones where it gets lost. We let a flower fade before it can have blossomed.

Rewind a bit! Come back to the time when you were a baby. You were this diamond too, which then was taken for a stone and thrown away. You were just as beautiful and undefiled. And when you miss your childhood, purity is what you miss; purity is what you long for.

Man is a miracle. "Man, as he is, is not a genuine article. He is an imitation of something, and a very bad imitation", wrote P.D. Ouspensky. Unfortunately, we don't see it and act as if we didn't want to see it.

We are constantly running somewhere. I'm saying 'running', because it is nothing but a run. However, recall to your mind the time you are in a rush. You act completely automatically, do everything mechanically and unconsciously. What do you see then? You run,

not noticing people, cars, the sky above your head; you see so little of everything you pass by. The same is true of your life: You run, run, run and don't see anything! The question is "Where are you running? What for?"

Wake up your consciousness! Look around! Freeze the moment. Try to perceive yourself as different! Look at the world not as man that was born here, but as a soul that was placed here for some reason, for some time and which will have to go. Taste and enjoy the sweetness of *living Life!* Ask yourself 'what do I live by?', 'what do I do?' And start everything anew!

Thank you.

